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BOB DASHAWAY, TREASURE HUNTER



“Up you go!” He pointed towards the royals
(page 67)

BOB DASHAWAY

TREASURE HUNTER

A Story of Adventure in the Strange South Seas

BY

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

AUTHOR OF

"Bob Dashaway, Privateersman," "The Boys of the Service" Series,
"American Fights and Fighters" Series, etc., etc.

ILLUSTRATED



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DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY

1912

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as "The Young American Treasure Hunters"

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DEDICATED
TO
MY YOUNGEST NEPHEW
CYRUS LOYD CHARLES BRADY

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Crescite et multiplicamini

PREFACE

THE pleasant reception accorded to Masters Dashaway and Barrett and their friends has encouraged me to continue further to chronicle their adventurous career; and, in accordance with promise in the first volume of the series, *Bob Dashaway, Privateersman*, I have here set forth what happened to them in the piping times of peace in that comparatively unknown South Pacific Ocean.

My young readers will be glad to learn that there was such a ship as the *Marigold*. That little vessel sailed in the company of Sir Francis Drake, making that desperate voyage through the Straits of Magellan and into the face of the unknown Pacific, where it disappeared from mortal view. I have often wondered, as I have read the familiar story in one form or another, what became of the *Marigold*. This is an attempt of the imagination to set forth her possible fate.

Some of the other characters in the book are taken from ancient and honoured seamen I have known in the days when I, too, went down to the sea in ships and sailed the great deep. Notably

is this true of Dethridge and Buntlin, who call to my mind old friends of wet decks and stormy seas; men who taught me knot-and-splice seamanship and the rough and ready side of the sailor's life. Clawfinger, too, I have seen. At least I have seen that claw-like talon of which the young reader can get some idea by looking at the map of the Island made for this book by a young relative of mine who himself has been far-voyaging, and is now in distant seas.

Naturally, it is not to be expected that boys like Bob and Jack are going to remain quietly at home. Before they reach man's estate there are many things yet to happen to them, and certain circumstances that are brewing are about to lead them to the other end of the world into the Arctic Seas. I hope many of the boys' friends will want to see how they behave themselves under these totally different conditions. I have an idea that when the time comes to weigh anchor the old Commodore and Captain Harper, Mr. Rayton and the two old shell-back sailors will be together again in the *Young American*.

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY.

*The Rectory of St. George's Church,
Kansas City, Mo., Easter, 1912.*

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BOB DASHAWAY, TREASURE HUNTER

CHAPTER I

A CRY FOR HELP IN THE NIGHT

WHEN we last saw the *Young American* she was the smartest, cockiest, sauciest privateer that ever flew the American flag and swept the mighty seas for prey. She is still under the same flag and the same fine old man commands her. She is still one of the smartest ships afloat, too; but alas, she can no longer be described as "cocky" or "saucy"!

The War of 1812 is happily over; the big pivot gun, the famous "Long Tom" that used to send its thunder over the forecastle, the long rows of gleaming brass nines and twelves she carried in her broadsides, have all been landed and stowed away ashore. The portholes on either side, however, are not all empty, for the heavier pieces have been replaced by eight small, short six-pounders, considered substantial enough by Commodore Harkness for any emergency which would be apt to

arise in the East Indies, the China seas, the Pacific islands, or wherever she might go a-cruising.

The natives of these far-off and unfrequented regions are apt to be somewhat troublesome on occasion, and it would not be well for so valuable a ship as the *Young American* to trust herself to their tender mercies without some protection; hence this slighter armament, at which in other more warlike days her people would have laughed.

With the signing of the treaty of peace between Great Britain and the United States naturally the business of the privateer, and her pleasure for that matter, abruptly ceased. Old Commodore Harkness, happily a very rich man now, had at first elected to enjoy the "piping times of peace" ashore. He retained his interest in ships and sea, however, and presently a numerous and well appointed fleet carried to far lands the house flag of Harkness and Dashaway. Madam Abigail Dashaway, his sister, had shrewdly embarked much of her abundant capital in the enterprise with him.

But an old sea dog like the commodore naturally could not be content forever to sit in a counting house, piling up profits in merchandising or

trading, the most lucrative business then engaged in by American citizens, and presently the old longing for blue water came upon him too strongly to be resisted. It was not more money he wanted so much as the heave of an unquiet deck beneath his feet, the salt breeze in his face, the white caps breaking before his eyes.

The *Young American* metamorphosed into a peaceful trader, her sometime flush deck disfigured by a long deck house amidships, and with a high poop aft and top-gallant forecastle added, had already made several successful voyages to Russian ports in the two years that had elapsed since the end of the war with England. On her return from her last voyage, the commodore determined to take command of her himself, outfitting her for a long cruise around the Cape of Good Hope to the East Indies, thence to China, across the Pacific to Honolulu, thereafter on down the South American coast, around the Horn, and so home again around the world!

The boys of her privateer days had scattered, some of the older ones had become officers of smart ships; two, Bob Dashaway and Jack Barrett,

his particular chum, had been sent rigorously to school, where the story of their warlike adventures made them the envy of their schoolmates. Both lads had just turned sixteen, they had never lost their love for the sea, and both were fully determined to go a-cruising again just as soon as they could wring reluctant consents thereto from their parents and get away. When they heard that the old commodore, whom they both loved, was to resume command of his famous ship for this long and fascinating voyage both clamoured to be appointed to her.

The share of the prize money earned by these youngsters on the most notable of the *Young American's* war cruises * amounted to a considerable sum, and they had both been prudent enough to follow good advice and invest it in the newly organised shipping firm of Harkness & Dashaway. They were both, therefore, to a certain extent, shareholders in the corporation and part owners of the fleet and of the *Young American*, the flagship so to speak.

* For a detailed account of this famous cruise see the first volume of this series, *Bob Dashaway, Privateersman*.

Bob Dashaway had some difficulty in winning his mother's consent for him to make the cruise. It was not so hard a task as it had been to get her permission to go privateering, but it was hard enough to exercise the young man's energies and determination to the utmost. His mother had not given up her cherished dream of seeing him a professional man, minister, lawyer, or doctor, and she very much wanted him to go to Harvard College to complete his education, but the boy's bent was toward the sea, and in the end his persistency overcame her objections as it had before.

Jack Barrett's mother had been dead for some years. Madam Dashaway had been a sort of a mother to him in the two years that had elapsed since the cruising and consequent friendship between the two lads, and Barrett's father was more easily persuaded, after Madam Dashaway's consent had been obtained. Behold, therefore, our young heroes again enrolled upon the ship's books as midshipmen, a thing unusual in the merchant service to be sure, but Commodore Harkness was a law unto himself in that as in almost everything else.

For various reasons of trade, and because he could get a better and more lucrative freightage there, the *Young American* had run down from New London to New York, and was anchored in the East River, loaded to the hatches and about ready to sail. Just as soon as certain very important business matters had been attended to she would clear and get under way. Commodore Harkness thought that the next day would enable them to up anchor and take their departure.

An aunt of Jack Barrett's, with some charming daughters, lived in New York at the time, and the boys had pleaded with the commodore for a last afternoon and evening ashore. As Commodore Harkness did not intend to be delayed by waiting for two young midshipmen in case he were enabled to weigh in the morning, he had given them strict instructions to be aboard at five bells, half-past ten, in the first night watch, and he had promised to have the dinghy at the wharf on Front Street, where the *Young American* had loaded, at four bells.

A little after nine o'clock, therefore, the two youngsters reluctantly left Mrs. Barrett's hospi-

able home, in a hired chaise, and were driven down to Front Street. Dismissing the vehicle there, they walked down the short street toward the appointed pier, near the south end of Manhattan Island. They were strolling along, gaily talking over the very pleasant afternoon and evening they had spent with Mrs. Barrett's daughters, Jack's cousins, and some other young friends, when their attention was aroused by a sudden sharp cry for help, which came faintly from the dark recesses of a cross street.

Although it was now going on toward ten o'clock at night Front Street was yet fairly well lighted, even though there were but few people to be seen abroad at that late hour. The cross street, however, was as black as pitch. The locality was one of the most dangerous in New York. It abounded with thieves, thugs, and blackguards; it was filled with sailors' boarding-houses, drinking dens, and evil resorts of the very lowest character, like the sea or river front of every large city of the time. So long as the boys kept to Front Street, however, they were safe enough, but dangers of all kinds lurked in the darkness back of the river front.

If they had been older and wiser they might have passed on about their business, disregarding the appeal, but a cry for help was a thing that neither of them could then have withstood, and by a common impulse they stopped and peered up the street whence the clamour had come.

“Did you hear it, Bob?” whispered Barrett.

“Aye,” returned the other, “some one cried ‘Help.’”

“Listen!” said Jack.

The two boys waited a moment but they could hear nothing.

“Can you see anything?” asked Bob at last, peering up the black way.

“Not a thing. Let’s go and see what’s up.”

“All right,” assented Dashaway promptly, while his hand went round to the back of his belt where a small derringer pistol hung under his short jacket.

They had no business to be carrying pistols, but in the end it proved fortunate that they did, for Barrett was similarly armed. Thereupon the two lads, drawing their weapons, ran rapidly up the street. They ran lightly, too, as boys naturally

would, but still their footfalls made some noise on the rough pavement. They had gone perhaps a block and a half when they came to the mouth of an alley running parallel to Front Street and at right angles to the way they had come.

A few feet from the corner a dim oil lamp hung in a recessed doorway. By its light a striking situation was revealed. A man was lying in the alley on his back, another man on his knees bent over him. The uppermost man had the prostrate one by the throat; he was choking and beating him savagely.

"Hi!" called out Dashaway impetuously. "Let that man alone."

The man who had the upper hand at this released the other, and sprang to his feet hastily, apparently in great alarm. He saw two figures rapidly approaching him, looming large in the mysterious darkness, and he instantly turned and fled, like the coward he was. It was useless to pursue him. The two boys, therefore, stopped by the prostrate figure of the other man. The light was dim, to be sure, but it was bright enough for them to see that the man's face was covered

with blood. He was gasping for breath, and his eyes were rolling. The two youngsters bent over him anxiously.

“Jiminy!” exclaimed Barrett. “He has been treated horribly.”

He whipped out his handkerchief and wiped off the blood on the man’s face. There was a little pool of water in the gutter, it had rained earlier in the evening, and Dashaway in turn dipped his own handkerchief therein and also bathed the man’s brow.

As they stood musing over him uncertainly, not knowing what to do next, the man revived a little, and spoke feebly and with a great effort.

“The pocket—of my—shirt,” he whispered. “He tried to—rob me.”

“Yes,” said Bob eagerly, “we frightened him away. Are you hurt?”

“He cut me—with a knife—in the shoulder,” gasped the man.

“Shall we call a constable, some one to help?” asked Bob.

“No, I am about done for, I guess.—Who be ye?”

"We are midshipmen of the ship *Young American*, bound for the East Indies and the China seas."

"You take it," faltered the man. "I'd rather anybody had it—than that claw-fingered—devil."

"Take what?" asked Bob.

"In the pocket—of my shirt."

"See what he has got there, Jack," said Dashaway, laving the man's face again with his wet handkerchief.

A few minutes' rapid search in the dark, and Barrett found and drew from the pocket of the man's flannel shirt a small packet wrapped in oil skins and securely tied.

"It'll tell you—where to git it," said the man with a great effort.

"Get what?" asked Dashaway.

"The treasure," he gasped out weakly, and then lapsed into unconsciousness, having lost much blood in the fray.

"Great Christmas!" exclaimed Barrett in great dismay. "He's gone sure! What'll we do with him, Bob?"

"I don't know; we can't leave him here, and

he may not be dead, you know," answered Dashaway dubiously.

"I hope not."

"Stow away that packet anyway, and then we'll decide what is to be done," suggested Dashaway.

"You take it, Bob," returned Barrett, "your jacket pocket is deeper than mine, and the flap has a button on it."

"All right," said the other, safely tucking away the packet, "now for the man."

But what to do with the prostrate, senseless man was indeed a puzzle. He was a big, strapping fellow, and the two youngsters unaided could not have carried him even as far as Front Street.

"Maybe this is where he lives," Barrett ventured at last, looking toward the dimly lighted doorway.

"I guess we will have to knock and find out," assented Bob.

"That'll be the best thing to try," was the answer.

Accordingly, Dashaway stepped to the door, lifted his pistol by the barrel, and prepared to hammer on the panels with the butt, when a soft,

insinuating voice out of the darkness interrupted him.

"Kin I be of any sarvice, young gents?" asked the newcomer, approaching the group.

"Yes, you can," answered Dashaway promptly, glad at the arrival of a full-grown man, "there's a man here that's been stabbed, maybe he's dead, and we don't know what to do with him."

"Lemme have a look at him," said the other, bending over. "Well, if 'tain't my old friend an' shipmate, Jack Buntlin," he remarked in well simulated surprise. "Have you young gents been tryin' to murder up my old shipmate this way?"

He spoke severely as he straightened up again, his forehead beetling, his eyes flashing.

"No," replied Bob, "we haven't tried to murder any one; on the contrary, we saved his life; some one had him by the throat and was beating him when we came upon him."

"And how, I make bold to arsk, did you young gents happen to be a-passin' by yere?"

"We were down on Front Street going to re-join our ship when we heard a cry for help, and we ran up here to see what was the matter."

"An' mighty brave it was of ye," said the newcomer admiringly. "Don't never pay to interfere between gents a-settlin' their private quarrels in these yere latitoods, 'specially in this watch o' the night. There's blood on your hands," he burst out suddenly. "I believe ye done it yourselves! You come along with me." He leaned forward as he spoke and made a grab at Jack Barrett. "I'll take ye to the constable."

"None of that!" said Barrett, whipping out his pistol and pointing it fairly at the man.

"Right O, Jack," cried Bob, doing the same thing with his firearm. "We are honest boys," he said to the stranger, "and we have told you the exact truth. Don't you try any games with us!"

"Lord love ye," laughed the man, confronted by the two weapons, which he noticed were held steadily in spite of the youth of those who had drawn them. "I was only doin' it to try ye. I knowed Jack Buntlin was bound to git into trouble sooner nor later. He had somethin' that was wanted mighty bad, ye see."

The packet instantly flashed into the minds of

both lads, but they very wisely said nothing. The newcomer next bent down and made a quick yet careful search of the prostrate man. He whipped off his own neckerchief, and by skilfully bandaging the deep wound in the man's shoulder succeeded in staunching the flow of blood. He also rapidly felt in the pocket of his shirt and jacket for the missing packet, and growled out a muttered oath of disappointment at finding nothing. The boys watched him in silence.

"Now he'll do for a while," said the man at last.

"Is he dead?"

"No, an' if you young gents will help me to carry him around to his boardin'-house, I guess we kin take care of him all right."

"Is it far?"

"Not very, jest up this alley about a cable's len'th, an' then down the cross street a couple of doors this side of Front Street. An' if you'll jine me in a tot o' grog to wet your whistle, w'en we gits there, you'll do me proud, sirs."

"We don't drink," answered Bob sturdily, "but we'll help you with the man, of course."

CHAPTER II

IN "THE RUNNING BOWLINE" TAVERN

THE newcomer took the head and shoulders of his prostrate friend, the two boys each one of the legs, and together they staggered slowly up the alley until they came to the proper cross street. Their progress was very deliberate, for the wounded man was large and heavy. They met no one on the way, and at last their long and arduous journey ended before the door of a large public house, or tavern, just off of Front Street. An old sign swinging and creaking in the night wind proclaimed the fact that the name of the place was "The Running Bowline." If the boys had but known it, this was one of the lowest of the many sailors' boarding-houses and evil drinking dens in the whole great city.

Without any ceremony the man butted the door open with his back and shoulders, and the little party, still bearing their burden, entered the tap-

room. It was brightly lighted by flaring whale oil lamps, and was filled with sailors of all nationalities in all stages of intoxication. Many were puffing away at short black pipes, and the thick, hot, noisome air was blue with tobacco smoke. The occupants greeted the newcomers in noisy fashion with a great uproar.

“What’s the matter?” growled a rough-voiced man presiding over a well-stocked bar at the further end as he became aware of the sudden excitement. “Who comes here?”

“Jack Buntlin, yere,” answered the newcomer, raising his voice to make himself heard above the tumult, “has got hisself cut up in a street fight, an’ these young gents an’ me have brought him yere.”

“Oh, it’s you, is it, Clawfinger?”

“Aye, it’s me right enough, matey. What’ll we do with Jack, yere?” answered the man with this peculiar name.

“Take him into one of the back rooms yonder and throw him on a bed,” growled the boarding-house master indifferently. “We’ll git a sawbones for him somewheres.”

Now Bob and Jack, who had been somewhat confused at first by the smoke and light and noise, realised at last what sort of a place they were in. They made up their minds to get out of it as soon as possible, but as nobody offered to assist the newcomer with the strange name in carrying the wounded man, who was still breathing, they thought it only proper and right to see him safely bestowed on his bed before they broke away. Accordingly, bearing the senseless man as before, they slowly made their way through the crowd of drunken, jeering, leering sailors, one of whom opened a door at the far end of the room which gave access to a long hall, on either side of which were a number of filthy little bedrooms.

Master Clawfinger, if that were his name, promptly turned toward the first one, which was only separated from the bar and the big room by a thin wooden partition. He pushed open the door with his foot. They carried the wounded man into the horribly uninviting room, and pitched him down heavily upon a ramshackle, dirty bed.

"Now that's done," said he, "I'll git a sea

sawbones in the mornin' to look arter him, an' he'll bring him to all right."

"Will he die, d'ye think?" asked Bob.

"Not much," was the prompt answer. "See yere"—he pulled out a flask of whiskey from the pocket of his short jacket, and forcing the man's lips open, poured a little of the fiery liquor down his throat. "That'll restore him," he added. "We kin leave him now."

"Good-night, then," said Bob, turning away.

"I hope your friend will be all right soon," politely added Jack, following his companion.

"Well, I'm much obleeged to both of ye young gents," answered the other, "an' I'd feel honoured if you'd wet your whistles at my expense out yonder."

"Thank you," said Bob courteously, "but it is very late, besides we don't drink and we have got to get back to our ship."

"I'd take it kindly if you'd honour me," persisted the man earnestly, coming closer and smiling ingratiatingly at the two youngsters.

"No," answered Barrett abruptly. "Come, Bob."

The two boys turned and walked rapidly down the corridor toward the door, closely followed by their new acquaintance. Their second entrance into the big room was a signal for another outburst of brutal gibes and savage uproar. They found their way out to the street barred by a mass of men who staggered to their feet bent upon having some rough sport with the trim, neatly dressed, clean, bright-looking lads.

"Not yet, my little hearties!" drunkenly cried out the most savage and burly of them all.

"I've arsked these young gents to have a tot o' grog with me," said their whilom companion, "but they don't drink, they sez."

"What!" cried another. "Be they milk-fed sailormen?"

"I never saw two likely lads like them as couldn't take their likker straight like men," urged a second.

"Here!" hiccoughed a third, proffering a full cup to the two youngsters. "Drain this, lads."

Barrett was a cooler boy than Dashaway; he saw the latter's eye flash, and he laid his hand on his friend's arm.

"Steady, Bob," he whispered, but Dashaway was not to be denied.

With a quick movement of his fist he struck the cup from the sailor's unsteady hand. The tin pannikin spun high in the air above the crowd, the fiery liquor it contained showering the nearest man.

"Well, if that ain't the worst way to treat good spirits," cried the angry man, lifting his hand threateningly and lunging at the boy.

The next instant Bob struck him full in the face with all his force. Another second he and Jack had their pistols out, for when the battle was actually begun Barrett proved just as quick as Dashaway.

"Gangway, you rowdies!" roared Bob.

Both boys made a mad plunge toward the door. One or two of the men in front gave back a little, but there were too many of them to be intimidated by two small boys, even though they were armed. There was a brief scuffle terminating in a sharp struggle. In the midst of the uproar the two pistols cracked, and two men went down, neither of them very badly hurt, but when the fracas was

over, Bob and Jack, covered with blood, were lying senseless on the floor.

Now that it was all over, some of the men appeared to be somewhat ashamed and slightly frightened as well. The boarding-house master was furious.

"What's to be done now?" he growled in rage. "Why didn't you let them youngsters alone? They'll come to and report us to the justices, the constables will raid the house, and there'll be the devil to pay."

"Why don't you ship 'em off on the *Betsey*? She wants some more hands," cried the curious man who had brought them there. "You could make 'em swaller some drugged whiskey now, afore they come to, an' when they opened their eyes again, they'd be at sea. She sails at day-break in the mornin'."

"That's a good idea, Clawfinger," remarked the boarding-house master. "Here, some of you lubbers fetch me that bottle over there."

He pointed to a well-known black flagon behind the bar, and willing hands soon placed it in his own. He poured a little of it down the

mouths of the boys, who were just beginning to recover consciousness, and in spite of their resistance, which was feeble enough in all conscience in view of their condition, forced them to drink a sufficient quantity of it for his wicked purposes.

He had the satisfaction of seeing that they instantly lapsed into complete unconsciousness again, and this time he knew that it would be lasting.

"Now the rest of you clear out," said the boarding-house master when he had at last finished his task. "It's late and you'll get no more liquor here to-night."

The other sailors were now more than willing to leave the place; some of them went back to the rooms they had rented in the rear of the building, while others staggered out through the front door into the street, seeking various places of evil resort in which to make a night of it. In a short space the only man left in the room with the boarding-house master was the man who had brought the boys there.

"Don't I git nothin' out of this?" he demanded as the two men faced each other.

"Didn't you git that packet from Jack Buntlin?"

"No," answered the man savagely, "I felt for it in the pocket of his shirt while I was liftin' him up, an' it was gone."

"Gone where?"

"Black Jake must ha' knocked him down an' stabbed him accordin' to the plan," answered the man, "an' I make no doubt he got it."

"How did them boys git mixed up in it?"

"They heerd a cry for help an' come runnin' up the street to see wot it was. They drove away Jake, but evidently not afore he'd got wot he wanted."

"You're playing in hard luck, ain't ye!" sneered the man.

"I am."

"And you'll git no treasure this time, will ye?"

"I'll git that chart away from Jake if I have to kill him," the man ground out the words wrathfully between his teeth. "He got it away from Buntlin, an' there won't be no trouble about my overhaulin' him."

"And the money I lent you for which I was

going to git a look at the map and a share of the treasure, how about that?" mocked the other.

"I tell ye, you'll git it in time," snapped out Clawfinger angrily. "Say, Joe, gimme a draught o' rum. I'm that dry I feel like a deesart island," he continued in a milder tone.

"All right," answered the boarding-house master, turning away with an evil smile the other man could not see.

He went to the bar, ostentatiously reached for a bottle, cleverly substituted for it the black one out of which he had already given the boys a draught, poured a full drink into a tin cup, and handed it to the man. Clawfinger tossed it off without winking, as if it had been water, and then he shuddered violently.

"Here!" he shouted fiercely, his face crimsoning. "What's the matter with that drink? You've played me false!" He hesitated, staggered, reeled, clapped his hands to his head. "Drugged!" he added thickly. "D—n you, I'll get even with——"

He suddenly collapsed into the nearest chair, his body lurched forward, his face fell on his hands

on the table. He was as unconscious as the two boys on the floor. The boarding-house master laughed.

“ I’ll git some of my money back right now,” he said to himself, “ without waiting for no imaginary island. An’ I’ll git rid of a troublesome customer, too. He knows too much already; I don’t want him spying around me. The *Betsey* wants more than two hands; the boys are rather small, but I guess they’ll have to pass. Here, Sambo! ” He raised his voice and a negro appeared. “ Git two or three of the blacks,” he directed, “ and carry these cattle down to the pier. They’re for the *Betsey*, she leaves with the ebb at four o’clock in the morning. I’ll be down to take them off in the boat in a short time.”

CHAPTER III

COMMODORE HARKNESS ON THE TRAIL

PROMPTLY on the stroke of five bells, or at half-past ten o'clock that night, Commodore Harkness came out of his cabin to the quarter-deck. Perfunctorily acknowledging the salute of the officer of the watch, he stepped forward to the starboard gangway, and silently and anxiously peered across the water toward the dimly lighted town.

People went to bed earlier in those days than now, and save for an occasional street lantern, the opposite shore was quite dark. He waited in the gangway a short time impatiently enough—like almost all veteran commanding officers of ships he did not at all enjoy waiting for anybody, especially for subordinates!—until the bell forward struck six, and still there were no signs of the return of the dinghy with the two boys.

Now he knew these youngsters thoroughly; they were as reliable a pair of "middies" as were to

be found on the ocean. The old commodore was perfectly certain that they would not wilfully have disobeyed his positive command to be on the ship not later than half after ten. It was inconceivable that they should have decided to remain over night with Jack Barrett's aunt, especially without notifying him and receiving his permission. He argued, therefore, that something must have happened to them. It was a disquieting thought. One of the boys was his nephew and both were very dear to him.

Instead of sending a lieutenant to look for them, he did a somewhat unusual thing: he directed the officer of the watch to rout out the crew of his own gig, which was swinging astern, and he prepared to go ashore and look for them himself! The anchor watch forward was ordered to go below and awaken the gig men, without unnecessarily disturbing the other men of the sleeping crew; meanwhile the commodore returned to his cabin, dropped a well-filled purse into his pocket, buckled on his sword, and thrust a brace of pistols into his belt, covering all with a light boat coat. The armorer was awakened also, and as the gig's crew

came tumbling aft, pistols and cutlasses were served out to them.

The New York water front was a dangerous place to be abroad in at night. It was best to go armed and prepared for any peril. The commodore was not given to foreboding, but it seemed to him that something serious must have occurred, and his anxiety was most unaccountably growing with every passing moment.

The gig was soon lowered away and drawn abreast the starboard gangway, whereupon the commodore took his place in the stern sheets, seizing the tiller himself. At his command the men gave way, and the little boat moved rapidly from the side of the ship into the blackness of the night and the river.

It was quite a pull to the distant shore, and on the way they approached what appeared to be a clumsy, rude, and badly steered shore boat. The commodore determined to hail this boat on the faint possibility that it might contain the boys.

“Boat ahoy!” he cried sharply, adding in the same breath, “Oars!”

At this his crew stopped rowing and the gig

drifted on by the momentum it had already acquired.

"What is wanted?" cried a gruff voice in reply out of the darkness.

"What boat is that?"

"None of your blamed business," answered the voice. "Keep on pullin', blast ye."

"Answer my question," thundered the commodore, "or I will run you down."

The two boats were now side by side, and as the rowers in the shore boat had seen fit to disregard the orders of her commander and had stopped rowing, they were lying practically motionless a few yards apart.

"Well, who are you?" cried he of the gruff voice.

"I am the captain of the *Young American* yonder. Now answer me and look sharp about it."

"I don't recognise no rights on your part to stop us, but if you must know, we're a shore boat from 'The Running Bowline,' with a shipment of men for the *Betsey* yonder down the river," was the surly, grudging reply.

"Oh," said the commodore, "why didn't you

say so at first. Give way, men!" And as the sturdy seamen of the *Young American* bent to their oars he called again to the other boat, which was already under way, "You don't happen to have seen anything of two young gentlemen belonging to my ship, have you?"

"Not a thing," was the instant reply. "We've got some prime sailor men here for the *Betsey*, and if you would like us to fill out your crew, just remember 'The Running Bowline,' Cap'n."

To this the commodore made no answer except to remark savagely under his breath:

"I would rather sail my ship myself than to take any of the scum that comes from that hole."

He knew very well the reputation of that sailors' boarding-house, which was notorious all over the world. The remainder of the passage to the wharf was made uneventfully. By the aid of the lantern which had been provided the commodore found the dinghy tied to the wharf, the two men of the crew and the coxswain dozing in the stern sheets.

"Have you seen or heard anything of Mr.

Dashaway or Mr. Barrett?" asked Harkness sharply.

"Haven't seed or heerd a thing of neither of them young gents, anyw'ere's, sir," said old Bill Dethridge, who was in charge.

"Umph!" said the commodore. "Dethridge, you come with me."

He detailed one of the crew of the gig to join the other men, and ordered them to take the dinghy back to the ship. The gig was made fast to the wharf, and followed by all but two men detailed as keepers, the commodore and Dethridge marched up the wharf toward Front Street. That march was easy, what to do next was something of a problem.

The commodore reflected deeply for a moment or two. Two courses were open to him. He must first find a livery stable and rent a chaise, which he could despatch to the house of Jack Barrett's aunt with the most intelligent of the seamen, to find out when the boys had left. The next thing was to find a constable and ask if any report of any misfortune or mischance that might have come to the boys had been brought in.

It was not difficult to find a livery stable on one of the cross streets and to despatch a young seaman to Mrs. Barrett's to find out when the boys had left, with orders to hurry back to the wharf and report as soon as possible. To find a watchman was harder, but at last they chanced on one, although to their great regret he could tell them nothing, except that he had no tidings of the boys whatsoever.

All this had taken a great deal of time. The bells from the different ships in the harbour were striking eight, or midnight, when the commodore, who was getting more and more anxious, determined upon the somewhat vain course of searching the streets on the very small chance that he might find something.

He was a systematic, methodical sort of a man. He divided his party, comprising nine men with Dethridge and himself, into four groups of two each. He stationed himself near the wharf and instructed two of the groups thoroughly to search the cross streets, and the two other groups to search the streets that ran parallel to the river. He recognised, of course, the difficulty under

which they would labour and the almost impossibility of their finding anything; still, there was a slim chance, and as the commodore was used to taking chances, he took that one.

Lanterns had been procured from the stableman, and each party was provided with a light. Promising a reward of a double eagle each to the first party which brought him any tangible news, the commodore sent them out, all being eager in the search. Bob and Jack were very popular with the men, and they needed no reward to stimulate them to action.

About one o'clock the man who had been sent uptown appeared in the chaise with the announcement that the boys had left Madam Barrett's about nine o'clock in a hired chaise, which had agreed to take them to the head of Water Front Street. The chaise had been called from a nearby livery, and the sailor had managed to find the driver, who had said that he had left them at Water Street shortly before, or about, ten o'clock.

With growing anxiety and disquiet the commodore paced the wharf from time to time. One by one the search parties reported to him that they

had examined certain streets and found nothing. Just when he had begun to despair and had decided that nothing further could be done until morning, Bill Dethridge and his mate hove out of the darkness and rushed up to the commodore. They were panting with excitement. They had run so rapidly—and seamen are not naturally good runners—that they could scarcely speak. It was evident that they had found something.

“Well, well, what is it?” asked the commodore in great impatience, as they stood breathing hard before him.

“This, sir,” panted Dethridge, extending something white.

“Show a light!” cried Harkness imperatively.

The next moment, by the light of the lantern held aloft by the other sailor, he took into his hands two handkerchiefs, wet, dirty, bedraggled, but covered with dark stains, which the commodore instantly decided were of blood! He examined them carefully with tightening lips. Handkerchiefs were not the common articles of use in those days that they have since become, and it was rather a fad for the two boys to have carried them,

but Madam Dashaway had kept abreast of the fashions and had provided each of the boys with a beautifully embroidered set. The commodore recognised them at once. It was certain evidence that something had happened to them, and Providence had given him a clue.

"Where did you find these, Dethridge?" he asked in great agitation.

"About four streets to starboard, sir, two to port, and then half a street to port again."

By this time two of the other parties had reported, and as the bells on the ships chimed half-past two in the morning, Harkness bade the whole group follow him, directing Dethridge to lead the way.

The little party walked rapidly through the silent streets and finally stopped before the doorway, over which the lantern still burned dimly, where the handkerchiefs had been found. On their way they were joined by the remaining parties, and by the captain's direction all the lantern light was thrown on the spot.

The street was muddy, and evidences of some kind of a struggle were quite plain.

"They have been here undoubtedly," he said at last.

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered Dethridge. "But it don't seem to me that they have been on the ground. Here's the outlines of where a man lay; it's bigger'n both our young gents."

"Aye," assented the commodore. "Perhaps the boys got him down—or—but there's no use surmising. Examine the street, every foot of it hereabouts."

While the seamen obeyed, the captain turned toward the archway with the dim lantern over its door. Hauling out one of his pistols he beat on the heavy panel with the butt of it. Presently the casement of a window opened above his head and a night-capped head was thrust out. A woman's voice quavered a question.

"Who's there?"

"I am Commodore Harkness of the ship *Young American*. I am looking for two of my midshipmen, boys of sixteen. Have you seen anything of them?"

The woman hesitated.

"Well, sir," she answered dubiously, "there

was a bit of a scuffle here in front of the house earlier in the night, but such things often happens hereabouts, and——”

“Were my lads in it?”

“I think so, but if you will excuse me a minute, I will get dressed and come down.”

“Bear a hand then,” returned Harkness, “while we delay they may be in great peril.”

The groups searching the street had found nothing more, and while they were reporting to the captain, the door of the house, which was secured by a chain, was opened a few inches, and a lean old face peered through the crack.

Harkness immediately stepped toward the opening.

“Would you mind giving me a look at your face, sir,” said the woman excitedly.

“Lights here!” cried the commodore, and as several were held aloft the mistress of the house had a good view of the officer.

What she saw reassured her, for she dropped the chain, opened the door, and bade him enter. Requesting Dethridge to follow, and directing the rest to remain outside and in readiness for a call,

the commodore stepped within the room. Without further ceremony he began:

“ You say there was some kind of a scuffle, or fight, before your house to-night? ”

“ Yes, sir,” was the answer; “ what I heard was a cry for help. I was sleeping in the upper room. I am a poor widow and live alone in the house. Behind the shutters yonder is a small store where I sell things to make a livelihood.”

“ Yes, yes,” said the commodore. “ You heard a cry for help; what did you then? ”

“ I got up and looked through the slats of the shutter at the street.”

“ And what did you see? ”

“ Two men were struggling in the gutter before the door. One of them struck the other. I saw the flash of a knife in the dim light, then they both went down, but the man underneath kept up the fight.”

“ Did you call the watch? ”

“ I was that scared and frightened I couldn't speak, sir, and while I was trying to think of what to do, two other people came running down the street. I was so excited I couldn't tell just exactly

what happened, but the man on top ran away. The two who came, who seemed to be boys or men of slight build, worked with the man that was down until they were joined by a third man. Then after talking some, and I couldn't hear what they said, they picked up the body, the third man taking the head and shoulders, and the two others the legs, and went down the street with it."

"What time was this?"

"It was a little after ten o'clock, as near as I can judge, sir. I went to bed as the clocks were striking nine, and I think I had been in bed about an hour. I hadn't been to sleep, for worrying, and——"

"Could you identify either of the people that you saw?"

"One," answered the woman promptly.

"Which one?" asked the commodore.

"The man who came last, who carried the head and shoulders of the dead or dying man away."

"And how could you identify him, ma'am?"

"Because he stopped just under the light that hangs from the door and raised his hand to brush the sweat off of his brow."

"Did you see his face?"

"I saw his hand."

"And what was peculiar about that?"

"It only had a thumb and two fingers. The two first fingers were grown together into one, and the two other fingers were grown together in the same way, but the first of these fingers was a great big powerful claw, like a vulture's, and the second was a little shrivelled up finger that didn't look as if it were any good to him."

"And that's all you can tell me?" asked the commodore.

"Every word."

"What is your name?"

"Greenlee, sir," answered the woman.

"I may want you to give evidence about this in court to-morrow morning," returned Harkness.

"Here's a little something I beg you to accept for your trouble, ma'am."

He laid a five-dollar gold piece on the table, saluted the woman gravely, and while she was profusely thanking him, turned and hurried out into the night.

"What did you make of it, Dethridge?" he said as they came into the street.

"Two drunken sailormen in a fight, sir. One of 'em cries for help, our young gents hears 'em, an' like a pair of gallant young fools, savin' your honour's presence, they bears away to help him. They frightens away the man on top, and the man with the claw finger happens to come along; they've took him away some place to get doctored up, an'——" The old seaman paused.

"And what then?"

"God only knows, sir," was the seaman's answer.

"Where could they have taken him?" said Harkness reflectively. "There'd be no places around here but sailors' boarding-houses and crimps, and I wouldn't give much for their chance in a place like that," continued the commodore. "Come, we can't find out anything further here; the woman said they went that way."

He had started down the street, followed by the men. His purpose was to make enquiries of every sailors' lodging house with which the district

abounded. There were numbers of them, but in the absence of any indication, the only possible way was to go from one to another until they came upon that they sought.

CHAPTER IV

OLD DETHRIDGE GETS THE INFORMATION

It was broad daylight when the old commodore and his band of thoroughly tired sailors turned into a certain street and stopped before the door of "The Running Bowline." A rude picture of the famous knot itself was seen beneath the lettering on the swinging sign-board that declared the place to be a true sailor's haven—save the mark! Most of the other boarding-houses and seamen's refuges the commodore had examined had been wide open; the night was their period of greatest activity as a rule, but in this last case the windows were shuttered and barred, the door was closed and locked, and there was no evidence of life about the place.

Now there was nothing to connect "The Running Bowline" with the disappearance of his beloved boys, and yet somehow, as the old veteran stood there before the shut door, he recalled meeting the shore boat the night before on the waters,

and he recollected the name. At once there jumped into his active mind a suspicion that there might be a solution of the mystery. As a matter of fact, "The Running Bowline" was about the last resort he could examine, since all the others had been visited, and failing there he would be at his wit's end to know what to do. Old Bill Dethridge evidently had something of the same kind of a thought, for as they drew near he remarked deferentially:

"Seems to me, yer honour, that we're goin' to hear somethin' from yonder hole."

"I hope so, I think so," was the answer.

The commodore was usually a reticent man, but he felt some need of counsel and discussion at this juncture, and he valued the shrewd opinion of the experienced old boatswain very highly. Therefore he spoke thus:

"Coming to the landing last night we passed a shore boat carrying a detail of men for an out-bound ship, the *Betsey*, and the man who steered her said she came from 'The Running Bowline.' Could she have been carrying our boys, drugged, and——"

"God forbid, sir!" ejaculated Dethridge solemnly.

"But what do you think?"

"It is barely possible, sir; in fact——"

"Well! we'll soon know! Arouse the house, men!"

The eager sailors pounded on the door with their fists, at first evoking no reply, but repeated knocking and yelling, which presently aroused the neighbourhood, at last aroused the house. The door was opened a little, and the black face of a frightened negro peered out. Dethridge immediately thrust his knee hard against the door, only to find it was secured by a chain within. Although he could not open it further himself, the old man acted promptly. He shoved the pistol he had already drawn into the face of the astonished negro, and ordered him to unloose the chain and open the door under pain of instant death. The frightened man tried at first to close the door, but the boatswain's knee prevented, also Dethridge had seized his collar with his left hand as he repeated his demand for entrance. Being unable to escape the man finally undid the chain, and the door was



Their attention was aroused by a sudden sharp cry
for help (page 7)

pressed open. The commodore instantly stepped within, only to be confronted by a huge, red-faced, burly-looking man, who immediately assumed the high hand.

“What d’ye mean!” he roared. “Breaking into a peaceful, law-abiding tavern in this way? I’ll have the law on you.”

The commodore recognised the voice of the man, and was not in the least intimidated by his bluster.

“Ah! my friend of the night before,” he remarked quickly, and then he took a hand in the questioning himself.

“What did you do with those two boys that came to your house last night?”

The attack was so sudden, so swift, so direct, it implied so accurate a knowledge of things he believed hidden, that the man, for all his assurance, was visibly perturbed. He went a little paler, but tried to carry it off with more bluster.

“I don’t know what you mean,” he growled. “I ain’t seen no boys.”

The old boatswain here showed his persuasive powers, for without orders he grasped the nearest

negro by the neck, shoved his pistol under the man's ears, and repeated the commodore's question.

The man was almost frightened white.

"Fo' de lub o' Gord!" he shrieked. "Tek dat ah pistol away!"

"What did you do with them young gents?" roared Dethridge. "Speak, or I'll blow your brains out!"

The boarding-house keeper sprang forward, only to be confronted by two or three of the sailors, handling their pistols and anxious to break into the game at a word from their commander.

The man blustered and roared; he made threats, he cursed and swore, but Dethridge never let go the negro, and the commodore seeing that things were working into his hands did not interfere. The man at last saw that nothing was to be gained by his endeavour to intimidate his visitors, and finally said, sulkily enough:

"Let the black go, and I'll tell you what I know."

"You will tell what you know without any conditions," answered Harkness steadily, "and you'd better be quick about it."

"Well, if you must have it then," answered the man, "two boys did come over here last night with a friend. They had some liquor, and then went away, and that's all I know about it."

"That's lie number one," said the commodore calmly. "The boys don't drink, they have never learned."

"They begun last night, then," returned the man with an oath.

"With whom did they go away?"

"With their friend."

"Was it the man with three fingers instead of five, one of them a long claw?"

"How did you know that?" asked the man in great surprise.

"And why did they come here at all?" continued Harkness, pressing his advantage.

"How do I know; I don't ask people that come here why they come, do I?"

"I can tell you why they came, sir," said a weak voice.

They all turned, and there in the doorway opening into the rear hall stood a big, athletic seaman, dressed in shirt and trousers, with a ragged, dirty

bandage around his shoulder. He had been a powerful man evidently, but just then he was pale and looked frightfully wasted and ill. At the sight of him Dethridge started.

"My old shipmate, Buntlin!" he cried.

"That's me, Bill," answered the man faintly, while the boarding-house master swore viciously.

The newcomer wavered and trembled violently. At the commodore's nod one of the sailors shoved a chair toward him upon which he sank down.

"Yer honour, I'm a sailor, sir, an old man-o'-war's man," he said, knuckling his forehead in true seaman fashion.

"Now what do you know about this?" was the question.

"I was attacked in the street last night near Widow Greenlee's, where I was going to seek lodging for the night."

"Ah, you were the victim, then?" said the commodore.

"Yes, sir. I could have taken care of myself easily enough, but I was stabbed from behind, an' the man had me down when two youngsters, havin' heerd my cry for help, drove him away. I had

only time for two or three words with them when I must have fainted from loss of blood. When I come to, I found myself here."

"Did those boys bring him?" asked the commodore of the boarding-house master.

"Well, yes, they did," the man admitted, seeing no help for it.

"They stowed me away in the room next to the inn parlour; there is only a thin board partition between, as you can see," went on Buntlin. "After I come to, I heerd pretty much all that passed. The gang tried to force drink on the boys; they fought; I heerd pistol shots; they was knocked senseless, drugged, and put aboard some outwardbound ship."

"Sink me!" cried Dethridge, threateningly advancing his weapon.

The commodore's face was livid with anger; he stepped forward and seized the boarding-house master by the throat.

"You dog," he cried, shaking him like a rat, and the huge man was quite helpless in the hands of the infuriated old officer. "I ought to kill you where you stand! You talk about having the

law on us; if you don't go to jail for this my name is not Joshua Harkness. Go! Some of you call the watch, bring the nearest constable. Now what ship did you put those lads on?"

But the accused man was speechless with terror. It was the negro that answered.

"De *Betsey*, suh."

"What about her?"

"She weighed anchor early dis mo'nin' on a sealin' v'yage to de Anta'tic, so dey said, suh."

"Oh! for God's sake, Cap'n!" cried the boarding-house master, finding his voice at last, "will any money square this thing?"

"Silence, you hound!" roared the commodore. "I'll attend to you. There isn't enough money in New York to pay me for those boys, and if a hair of their heads is hurt, as I live, you shall swing for it. Dethridge!"

"Sir."

"I leave you in command here; when the constable comes, turn these men over to him for kidnapping. Say I'll prefer charges against them in court when it opens this morning, and then report at the wharf."

“An’ if I might make so bold, sir, as to ax you w’ere you’re goin’ now?”

“You may. I am going to the harbour master. Probably I’ll have to go to his house and rout him out at this time of the morning to find out where the *Betsey* cleared for.”

“An’ wot then, sir?”

“We’ll see that this man is dealt with as he deserves by the law, and then we’ll hunt that ship down, by Heaven, through every water in the globe.”

“Three cheers for the old commodore!” yelled one of the husky blue jackets, his sporting blood aroused by the bold proposition.

“Sir,” said the wounded man weakly, after the cheering had stopped, “I’ve done you some little service, grant me a favour.”

“What is it?” asked the commodore, reaching for his purse.

“Not that, sir,” protested the other, “but there was a man here with a claw finger.”

“Aye!” said the commodore. He turned to the boarding-house keeper. “What became of him?”

"He went along with the boys," was the surly answer.

"Drugged?"

"Aye."

"I've got a score to even up with him, sir," continued Buntlin. "Ship me aboard your vessel, yer honour."

"But you are wounded."

"'Tain't serious, I guess, sir," answered the man, "'cept for the loss of blood. A few breaths o' sea air will put me all right, an' I got a score to pay that man."

"You are a sailorman?" asked the commodore.

"Aye, sir; I'm an A. B. I was with Commodore Porter in the frigate *Essex* in the South Pacific when we fought the *Phæbe* and the *Cherub*. I was left behind, sir; I got a story to tell that it'll be wuth your while to hear. There's treasure!"

"I want no treasure but my boys," said the commodore.

"Well, there'll be nobody on your ship that'll have more interest in huntin' 'em down than I will."

"I vouches for Jack Buntlin, yer honour," in-

terposed Dethridge. "He's a sailorman, good an' true, an' has been shipmate with me afore the war."

"Very good," said the commodore, "take him off to the *Young American* with you when you join the ship. See that he gets a shore doctor, a proper sawbones, to put him in shape before he goes, and if you can get any more information out of these dogs in my absence, you are fully authorised to get it."

"Oh! for God's sake, sir," cried the boarding-house master, "don't leave me to the mercy of this brutal old villain!"

But he spoke to deaf ears.

"Villain, is it?" said Dethridge, coming closer to him and staring him in the face. "You'll talk about me, will you!" he cried menacingly as he got the old ruffian by the throat.

But the commodore did not stay to hear the rest. Hurry as he would, Harkness could not overcome the necessary delays, lay the information before the magistrate, give his testimony, get the boarding-house master on his way to prison, and get his clearance papers, which all had to be

changed in view of the emergency, until a good twenty-four hours after the sailing of the *Betsey*, which he learned was bound for Rio Janeiro, the River Plate ports, the Falkland Islands, and the seal rookeries in the South Shetlands far down below Cape Horn. In fact, the *Young American* was nearer thirty-six hours than twenty-four behind the *Betsey*, for the commodore was not ready to sail until late at night, and wind and tide did not permit him to get under way until late the following morning.

The *Betsey* had the reputation of being a very fast ship, but Commodore Harkness had no fear but he could overhaul her at one place or the other, at Rio, at the Falklands, or finally in the Antarctic seas. He would rake the Antarctic Ocean as with a fine comb until he found her and got back his boys. He thanked God that he was rich enough to throw his trading plans to the winds and devote himself to the long stern chase which began when his eager crew dragged the anchor from its oozy bed and the ship, covered with new and snowy canvas, glided rapidly down the bay, wind and tide urging her on.

CHAPTER V

INTO FRIENDLY HANDS ON THE "BETSEY"

THE wind was fresh and the ship was pitching heavily when two very desperately sick boys slowly awakened to semi-consciousness in the small, stuffy, ill-smelling forepeak of a strange ship.

It was Bob Dashaway who first realised where he was. He had never felt so badly in his life, he thought, as he lay rolling about in the narrow bunk trying to get his bearings. All that had happened recently was a blank to him for the time being. He only knew that he had a splitting headache, that he was very sick at his stomach, and that he was on a ship. He realised, of course, that the ship was not that to which he rightfully belonged, but as to what ship she was and how he came there he was still in the dark. He lay rolling and fighting to get back his full consciousness, when a feeble hail from his friend who lay in the berth opposite

aroused his attention. Jack Barrett was also slowly gaining consciousness. The two boys rose on their elbows and stared at each other.

"Bob!" exclaimed Jack ruefully.

"Jack!" answered Bob in the same tone.

"How did we get here?"

"Blest if I know! Let me think; I have it now."

"What was it?"

"Why, at that sailors' boarding-house."

"'The Running Bowline'?"

"That's it."

"The man that was stabbed, you know?"

"Yes, I remember, the man with the crooked finger."

"He is yere with you, gents," said a deep but very disgusted voice from a bunk forward.

"What!" exclaimed both at once, "you, too?"

"At your sarvice, gents. Oh! ain't this——" growled the seaman, reaching out his hand, and as the sunlight from the open hatchway fell upon it both boys were startled to observe again its curious malformation—the huge, fierce, strong talon that matched the massive thumb, and the

weak little claw, where the third and fourth fingers would be.

The sailor dragged himself out of the bunk, and stood uncertainly on his feet in the forepeak. He opened his mouth, and such a torrent of oaths and curses burst from it as the youngsters had never heard. The effect of it was, that if he ever got his claw on the neck of that boarding-house master, he would choke him to death. In the meantime, he invoked every other penalty that an extensive sea vocabulary of profanity could formulate upon his head.

As soon as he could make himself heard, Bob interposed.

"Belay that cursing," he cried peremptorily, "we've heard enough of it."

"Belayed it is, sir," answered the man, coming at last to a full stop, perhaps as much for lack of breath as anything else.

"The point of the business now is, where we are, and how we will get away?" continued the boy, fighting against dizziness, headache, and nausea.

"I guess I can throw some light on it," said the man with the claw finger. "We've been drugged,

kidnapped, and put aboard some outward bound ship."

"What ship, and where bound?" asked Barrett.

"We'll soon find that out by goin' on deck and givin' play to our jaw tackle."

"Well, how came you to be here?" asked Bob.

"You remember helpin' me bring Jack Buntlin to 'The Running Bowline'?"

"Yes."

"Aye, we remember that," said Bob.

"Well, the sailors tried to make you drink in the taproom. You put up a stiff fight, you two, with your little barkers, and I jined in to help you, bein' as how you was my guests, so to speak, an' we all three got knocked over together. Then when they laid us out, I guess they poured some drugged whiskey down us, an' here we are."

"Well, we are awfully sorry," said Barrett, "that you got into trouble helping us."

"I'd do anything for a shipmate," protested he of the claw finger glibly, "an' you got into trouble helpin' my old friend Jack Buntlin."

"I see," said Bob Dashaway, "and who was it that cut up this Buntlin friend of yours?"

"A half-breed named Black Jake, I take it; you see, Jack Buntlin had—a certain—er—packet that was wanted mighty bad."

"What sort of a packet?" asked Jack Barrett.

"Why it was a map an' some directions."

"What kind of a map?"

"A chart of an island."

"Well, what made it valuable?"

"There's a treasure ship stranded there."

"Great Christmas! you don't mean it!"

"Yes, I do mean it."

"Spanish?" asked Bob at this juncture.

"No, English," was the answer.

"And this Black Jake got the map, you think," continued Dashaway.

"Sartin!" the sailor ground out with a curse as he made the admission. "Meanwhile, here I am," he added wrathfully, "bound out for God knows where, an' him roamin' around with that there treasure chart."

Just as Jack Barrett opened his mouth to speak, a gruff voice came down through the open hatchway.

"Below, there!" growled the man, whose head they could see over the combing. "From the sound of you, you're awake. Break out on deck here and turn to, and bear a hand about it. We are short-handed as it is, and this is no place for gamming."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the old sailor. "Come along, my little hearties. We're in fer it," he said under his breath, "we can't git out of it, an' we might as well make the best of it until we gits to port or gits a chance to desart."

He sprang up the ladder that led to the deck, and presently, followed by the two boys, stepped over the hatch combing and into the light.

It was late in the afternoon evidently from the altitude of the sun. The three found themselves on the flush deck of a large well-found, well-rigged ship. They had not much time to take in her fine points, however, for the mate who had called them immediately opened his batteries upon them.

"Great Jehosaphat!" he cried in deep disgust. "What have we got here? That scoundrel promises us three able seamen and he sends us"—

his eye fell on the maimed hand of the claw-fingered one—"he sends us a vulture and a pair of doves." His glance took in the smart, gold-braided, brass-buttoned jackets of the two boys, for Commodore Harkness had invested them in a quasi naval uniform. "Brass Bounders!" he bellowed in great wrath, and spat disgustedly over the side.

The hands of the man who had been likened to a vulture twitched viciously. He lifted his maimed member menacingly.

"You'll find out, sir," said he, with a black look at the officer, with scarcely veiled insolence in his voice and bearing, "that at passin' a weather earrin' this yere claw of mine is equal to any ten fingers you ever seed, an'——"

"Belay that, you!" roared the mate threateningly, taking a step toward the man who faced him resolutely enough.

"I ain't signed no articles for this v'yage as yet," he answered. "I'm a free an' law-abidin' American citizen, I am, an' I demand to be set ashore."

The mate laughed.

"Articles or no articles, you are entered as one

of the crew of the ship *Betsey*, and while you are aboard you will obey orders and do your duty like the rest, or——”

He snatched a belaying pin from the fore pinrail and lifted it threateningly as Clawfinger backed away from him.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” said Dashaway, respectfully enough, “but we are midshipmen attached to the *Young American* of the Harkness-Dashaway line. We have been drugged and kidnapped aboard this ship, and we demand to be set ashore. Commodore Harkness, who owns the line and commands the *Young American*, is my uncle. My name is Bob Dashaway, and this is my friend and shipmate, Jack Barrett.”

“So you want to be set ashore, too, do you?” laughed the mate sarcastically. “Why, certainly, all we’ve got to do is to put the ship about, I suppose, and beat back to New York harbour, and put you aboard the *Young American* with our humble apologies. We are perfectly willing to do that, of course. That’s a common practice among shipmasters. We have nothing on earth to do but to sail around in this ’ere Atlantic Ocean to

oblige a couple of innocent babes in arms like you be."

The man's sarcasm was plainly evident. Bob's face flushed.

"Commodore Harkness is perfectly able to pay you for your trouble and delay, and I pledge you my word that he will."

"Word of a sucklin' dove like you?"

"Look here!" growled Barrett, who was slower to anger but equally as resolute as his friend, "don't you talk that way to us."

"Maybe you don't know what you are," laughed the mate, who seemed to enjoy baiting the boys.

"We know very well what we are," answered Dashaway.

"And what are you, if I may make so bold as to ask, sir?" asked the mate.

"We are midshipmen of the *Young American*, I told you, and——"

"Belay that!" interposed the officer. "I will tell you what you are. You are a pair of infernally impudent boys on this ship. I have wasted enough time with the whole three of you. This claw-fingered gent will go into the port watch, my watch."

You two babes are about equal to one man, and you will go into the second mate's watch."

"I demand to see the captain of this ship," cried Dashaway.

"Steady now, steady now, young gents," interposed the claw-fingered one. "We've got no rights here, the officer won't stand for no mutiny."

"Now that's downright sensible of you," sneered the mate. "You have it about right. I don't want to be too hard on two young lambs as have just been torn away from their mothers. Have you ever been to sea?"

"Yes, we have," answered Barrett.

"Tumble aloft, one of you to the foreroyal, and the other to the mainroyal, and loose the sails, the breeze is moderating and she'll stand a little more canvas."

"I refuse," said Dashaway promptly.

"You what?"

"I am not a member of your crew, and I won't take any orders from you or anybody. I want to see the captain."

"I am all the captain you will see, young man,"

said the mate fiercely. "Up you go!" He pointed toward the royals.

"Better do it, young gents," whispered the claw-fingered sailor.

"Never!" cried Bob resolutely.

The next instant the mate kicked at him with his heavy boot. Bob avoided it by a quick jump sidewise, and then he was at the mate's throat. His shipmate and friend was not a bit behind him. He, too, sprang at the mate like a young tiger, and the three of them came heavily to the deck, where they writhed, struggled, and rolled fiercely.

Now the mate was a big powerful man, able to take care of three or four lads like Bob and Jack, but their onslaught had been so sudden and unexpected and they fought him so fiercely, they clung to him like a couple of wildcats, that for a few minutes he was taken at a disadvantage, and it was not until after a hard struggle that he again got the upper hand.

The men on deck, and it being in the second dog watch pretty nearly everybody was on deck, regarded the contest with interest and excitement, but took no part in it. They had seen men kid-

napped, or as it would be described now, "shanghaied" before. Nor were they there to help the mate enforce discipline, that was his affair, and indeed he would have taken shame to himself forever if he had been compelled to call for assistance, especially in such a case as this. The sympathy of the crew, of course, was with the boys as against the officer, but their sympathy was not sufficiently aroused to make them lift a finger to help. The second mate, who had the watch, came running forward, asking his superior if he wanted any help.

"No," answered the other briefly, managing at last to tear Bob's fingers away from his throat. "I can take care of them."

He struggled to his feet and finally succeeded in getting each boy by the back of his jacket, where he could hold him at arm's length.

"Great Jehosaphat!" said he, rather good-humouredly, he was not at all a bad sort of man at heart, "you are the pluckiest pair of brats I've ever seen. Did ye know that you have just been guilty of mutiny on high seas? I could have you put in irons for it and hung."

"We are not members of your crew and we can't mutiny against you," growled Jack Barrett, pale and breathless.

"Go at him, Jack," cried Bob, brushing away with his hand the blood from his nose, which had been badly banged up in the fight.

As he spoke he made another plunge toward the mate, but the latter held him with a grip of iron. With arms extended neither boy could reach the person of the officer. He was a man of gigantic strength, and he held them easily apart.

"Now, none of that, my little hearties, none of that!" He laughed. "You don't get me again."

"You!" cried Bob, writhing impotently in the grasp of the man. "You, Clawfinger, why don't you help us?"

"He knows which side his bread is buttered on," said the mate. "I might make allowances for your tender years, although you have fought like wildcats, but I never would make any allowances for him. He's a man and knows better."

"I am sorry for you, young gents," answered

the sailor to whom they had appealed, "but you see how it is, he's got the upper hand."

"That'll do from you," answered the mate decidedly. "Now will you turn to, youngsters?"

"Speaking for myself," answered Dashaway, "never!"

"He speaks for me, too," replied Barrett.

"Well, I hate to do it," said the mate pleasantly enough, "but I guess you've got to have your heads cracked together in the hope that I can knock some sense into them, and——"

He swung the boys about quickly, intending to bang their heads together, but the instant his grip relaxed and his arms ceased to be stiffly extended both boys, as if moved by a simultaneous impulse, surged toward him.

Not expecting a renewal of the attack, which came coincidently with a heavier pitch of the ship, the mate went down again. He had to let go the boys' collars to get up, and the next moment they were on his breast and at his throat as before. They wallowed on the deck a second time, the mate making violent efforts to thrust one boy aside and get to his feet in spite of the grasp of the

other. He had succeeded in shoving Barrett away, and had about got to his knees with Dashaway clinging to him, when a quiet voice broke in on the fracas.

"What is this, Mr. Rayton?" asked the newcomer.

"Mutiny, sir! Mutiny on the high seas!" answered Mr. Rayton, very red-faced and angry, making a violent effort, tearing Bob away and throwing him on the deck.

"Who are these lads?" continued the newcomer.

"That blackguard from 'The Running Bowline' put 'em aboard last night about the turn of the tide, they and that claw-fingered rascal over there."

"At yer honour's sarvice, sir," answered the claw-fingered man, knuckling his forehead with his malformed hand.

"He's got some sense," continued the mate, "if his fingers are claws. I ordered these little devils to turn to and lay aloft and loose the royals, and for answer they jumped on me. If they turn out to be as good sailors as they are fighters we are in luck, sir."

By this time Bob and Jack, who had been half stunned, had got to their feet. The mate's fist had cut Jack over the eye, and it was swelling and blackening rapidly. Blood was still flowing from Bob's nose, and together they presented two gory and battered faces toward the newcomer.

"Are you the captain of this ship, sir?" asked Barrett, respectfully enough.

"I am, and if you will take my advice you will turn to without any further trouble. So far as I can see, Mr. Rayton has dealt rather gently with you, and——"

"Jack! Jack!" cried Dashaway, unceremoniously interrupting the captain, "don't you see who it is?"

He seized his friend by the arm and shoved him forward. Barrett stared at the newcomer with his good eye.

"Great Christmas!" he said at last. "You are right, Bob; it is our old friend, Mr. Harper."

"That's my name," said the captain, "although how you know it passes my comprehension."

"I know your name, sir," answered Bob, wiping

away the blood again and coming closer, "because I know you. I have served under you, and——"

"Lord love you!" exclaimed Mr. Harper, recognising him at last. "May I be dashed if it isn't young Dashaway."

"And Jack Barrett, sir. You knew him?"

"Of course, two of the *Young American's* reefers. What in the name of Heaven are you two youngsters doing here in my ship?"

"It is a long story, sir," answered Dashaway.

"Mr. Rayton," said Captain Harper, "I am greatly indebted to these boys and to the uncle of this one. There has been some serious mistake about this. Will you come below with me to my cabin with the lads until we hear their story?"

"Very good, sir," answered Mr. Rayton, who was both puzzled and angered at the outcome of the affair. The captain turned aft and bidding the boys follow him walked toward the companion-way.

Before Mr. Rayton turned to accompany them his eye fell on the claw-fingered one grinning maliciously at his discomfiture.

"You white-livered, claw-fingered son of a sea-

cook!" he roared. "Wipe off that grin, lay aloft, and loose that foreroyal and bear a hand about it. Mr. Harmon," this to the second mate, "please keep him busy until it is my watch."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the second mate promptly, as Clawfinger sprung into the rigging and Mr. Rayton plunged down the companion hatch.

A couple of towels and some cold water had freshened both boys a bit, and as Mr. Rayton entered the cabin they began their story. It was soon told.

"It is too bad, boys," said Captain Harper, when the brief recital was over. "I'd do anything on earth, or sea rather, to oblige Commodore Harkness, or any of his kith or kin or friends, but I'm already delayed far beyond the ordinary time of starting. I ought to be at the South Shetlands by now, but sickness, lack of a full crew, and other detentions have kept me a good six weeks behind my appointed date of departure. Well, I wouldn't mind that; I'd turn back for New York anyway, only as a matter of fact, I think it would be no use at all. You see, your uncle will find you are on

this ship, and if he is the man I take him to be, he is already under way on our course. He can easily ascertain from the harbour master when we sailed, and from the warden of the port, our destination and course. We will make a quick run down to Rio, leave letters for him, if we do not find him there ahead of us, which would not surprise me at all, as I remember the *Young American* was a very fast ship, and he will overhaul us sooner or later. That is the best I can do for you."

"And that is enough, I am sure, sir," answered Bob promptly.

"Quite enough," assented Jack.

"Meanwhile, of course, you will berth aft with me."

"Beg your pardon, Captain Harper," said Bob, "but Mr. Rayton said you are short-handed, and——"

"We are that," growled the mate, who had remained an interested listener of the story.

"Well, then, Jack and I will be glad to turn to if your mate will assign us to a watch, and we will endeavour to show him that we can do a sea-

man's trick on the yards, or at the wheel, or on the halyards between us."

"What do you say, Mr. Rayton?" asked the captain.

"Why, I say it's a fine and proper spirit that's being showed by these boys. I think I will give Clawfinger to the second mate and take 'em in my watch in his place."

"And I hope you don't bear any malice to us for our attack on you on the deck a little while ago," continued Bob.

The mate laughed.

"If you are as good sailors as you are fighters, you'll do," he said. "Whew!" He felt his throat and neck. "You certainly did choke me good and proper."

"For to-night," said the captain to Mr. Rayton, "we'll give 'em a rest. They have had a pretty tough time, and they look rather white around the gills from the effects of that drug. And you didn't handle them any too easy."

"He was as gentle as he could be," said Jack quickly, at which both officers laughed.

“ I will have the cook make you a good bowl of hot soup,” continued the captain, “ then you can take a good wash down, and then I order you to turn in for the night; to-morrow you can take your trick with the rest.”

CHAPTER VI

THE MAP OF THE ISLAND

SOMETHING to eat, a good wash, two comfortable bunks in the spare cabin off the captain's room aft, and a long, sound, healthy, untroubled sleep lasting through the afternoon and night, put the two boys in good shape again.

The bell forward was striking seven when they tumbled out on deck and began to dress. As Bob slipped on his jacket, he first felt and then took from the pocket the packet to which neither of them had given much attention in the exciting events through which they had passed. Indeed, there had been no chance to examine it heretofore. Now that he had it in his hand, he could not resist inspecting it. Jack Barrett stepped close beside him, and together the boys untied the lashings and opened it.

It had been carefully tied up in oilskin; prac-

tically in a waterproof condition. Inside the wrappings lay an old, musty, faded piece of parchment. On it had been rudely traced with some red fluid which still retained its brightness, a very curious map. From the pictures of the strange little animals playing in the sea and from the looks of a quaint, old-fashioned drawing of a ship, it was evident, or would have been to an expert, that the map was very old. Just how old neither boy, of course, could determine.

The map was that of an island. It was drawn with no little skill by some one who evidently knew a good deal about topography and had made maps before. The parchment was the skin of some animal, which had been carefully tanned. The red-coloured ink was of wonderful permanence and durability! Indeed, the outlines of the map seemed to have been cut or scratched in the thick parchment and then filled in with the scarlet ink, or whatever it was. The shape of the island was very curious. It looked not unlike a gigantic claw or talon. As the two stared at it wonderingly, Bob broke into a sudden exclamation.

"By Jiminy, Jack!" he said. "It looks just like old Clawfinger's hand."

"Aye," agreed Barrett, "it certainly does; I was just about to say it. I wonder where the map comes from and what it means."

"Let me think," answered Bob. "That man we got it from spoke of treasure, didn't he?"

"Yes, and the man who attacked him evidently was trying to get this very map."

"Aye! and Clawfinger must have known something about it."

"I'll tell you what it is," said Barrett earnestly. "I'll bet it is a map of a treasure island. Let me look at it again, Bob."

"I believe you are right," said Dashaway, handing over the precious drawing.

Jack took it over to the side of the cabin, close to the dead-light, and examined it very carefully.

"Look here, Bob," he said, pointing to an indenture in the contour with printed words about it which the boys made out to be, "*Cave where Marigold lies.*"

"Marigold!" mused Bob. "What kind of gold is that, I wonder?"

"I haven't the least idea," answered Jack, "but it is some kind of gold evidently."

"Well, it isn't much use to us," said Bob, "since the latitude and longitude have been torn off. See here."

He pointed to a corner where the word "Lat," with the letters "Lon" just beneath them and a jagged edge beyond, indicated that something had been torn away.

"Yes," said Barrett, "and look at the edge where it is torn, the other edges of the parchment are dull and old, but this is a whitish yellow and new."

"I see," said Bob; "somebody has evidently torn off the latitude and longitude. If we could get that missing part of the parchment, we would know just where to go to find out just what this Marigold means, and all about it."

"Well, we can't do anything more now. Let's finish dressing," answered Barrett, "and then we'll show it to Captain Harper."

At that moment some one tapped at the door of the little cabin.

"What is it?" asked Dashaway.

"Captain Harper says breakfast will be ready at eight bells," answered the cabin steward, who was on the other side.

"Aye, we'll be ready," was the reply.

In a few moments the two boys reported to the captain in his cabin. The second mate had the watch, and Mr. Rayton was therefore present at the table for the morning meal.

"Good-morning, how do you feel now, boys?" asked Mr. Harper.

"Fine, sir," answered Dashaway.

"We slept well, sir," added Barrett, "and as far as I am concerned I am as hungry as can be."

"Fall to, then," laughed Captain Harper, after he had reverently asked a blessing on the meal, and in a few minutes both boys vigorously attacked the smoking bacon, the fried potatoes, and the steaming coffee. Conversation was at a discount for a short space until the requirements of the inner man had been satisfied.

As soon as the boys had finished their breakfast, at a nod from Jack, Bob began.

"Captain Harper and Mr. Rayton, I believe

we told you about the packet we got from the shirt of the sailor we helped."

"Yes, I remember that you did."

"Here it is, sir," said Bob, producing it from the pocket of his jacket, and handing it across the table.

The captain took it, opened it, and spread out the map, studied it, and passed it over to the mate.

"What do you make of it, Mr. Rayton?"

The mate bent his brows and examined it minutely and with care; finally he got up from the table and walked over toward the companionway and studied it more carefully by the light that came down the open hatch.

"Well, sir," he said at last, "it is plain enough that it is the map or chart of an island. It has been drawn by a sailorman, I take it, and one of some education and accustomed to making maps, for the workmanship on it is very fine. It is on the skin of some animal, and the red tracing is probably the juice of some plant, or maybe comes from the cochineal worm. It is a curious looking island. I have been in the South Seas more than once, and I've never run across anything like it myself, yet

I guess that it is a Pacific island. It is partially surrounded by reefs, I take it. Otherwise it must be the product of some volcano."

"You haven't the least idea what island it is, or where it is?" asked the captain.

"Not the least in the world, sir," answered the mate, handing it back.

"Evidently it once bore the latitude and longitude," said Captain Harper, looking at it again. "See, this corner has been torn off, and the tear runs right through the words latitude and longitude. What is that printing there?"

"It says, '*Cave where Marigold lies,*' sir," answered the mate, "although what that means, I don't know."

"The man we got it of said it was a treasure island, sir," interposed Dashaway.

"And evidently some one considered it valuable because they nearly killed him to get it," commented Barrett.

"Marigold!" mused the captain.

"We never heard of that kind of gold, sir," ventured Bob.

"It is a name," said the captain, "probably the

name of a ship. I do not remember any famous *Marigold*, however."

He studied the plan again.

"Well, it is no use to us now as it is. I don't suppose there is a part of the globe where ships sail that is so little known as the South Seas. Failing the latitude and longitude the map is perfectly worthless. It is an interesting curiosity. It must be terribly old. They do not put all those dolphins and ships and sea monsters and so on, on the maps nowadays." He handed it back to Bob with a deep sigh. "I wish we could find out something more about it," he continued a little anxiously. "If there is a treasure there, I should like to go and get it. I have a wife and three girls and a baby boy at home, and they need all the treasure I can find."

"It is our map, sir," answered Bob, "but if there is any treasure there and we could manage to find it with the *Betsey*, we would be perfectly willing to divide it all around, wouldn't we, Jack?"

"Of course," answered his friend.

Mr. Rayton laughed.

"I've often heard an old proverb that says some-

thing about not counting your chickens before your eggs are hatched," he said.

"It doesn't do any harm in this instance," said the captain, smiling back at Mr. Rayton.

"And it is mysterious and strange how we came across the map," said Jack. "Maybe some day we will find the missing piece, and——"

"Perhaps so," returned the captain; "stranger things have happened."

"If I was a betting man," said Mr. Rayton, "I would bet a thousand to nothing that you will never find it. However, there is no harm in dreaming about it."

"Perhaps you had better keep it, Captain Harper," said Bob, handing the parchment back. "By the way, sir, what do you think the island looks like?"

The captain examined it again.

"Why it looks like a three-fingered claw or talon," he answered.

"Mr. Rayton at that came down upon the table with his large fist.

"Clawfinger!" he cried. "I have it."

"You mean?"

"The man who came aboard with these youngsters, perhaps he knows something about it."

"He seemed awfully anxious to get something from that man we helped, and appeared to be badly disappointed when he found it was gone," said Dashaway.

"Of course; you didn't let on to him that you had the map yourselves?" asked Mr. Rayton.

"Not for a moment, sir," was the prompt reply.

"That was well done," said Mr. Rayton, evidently well pleased.

"Very well indeed," interposed the captain. "Perhaps you had better let me handle the affair. I will think it over, and we will talk about it again. If I question him I will have you all in here. Now, are you ready to turn to?"

"All ready, sir," said both boys, jumping up.

"And thank you very much for treating us so nicely," said Jack.

"And as we will be for'ard of the mast for the cruise, I do not suppose we will have another opportunity of expressing our gratitude," added Bob.

"You can work for'ard of the mast, as we are so short-handed," returned the captain, smiling pleas-

antly at their cheerful willingness, "but you will berth and mess aft here with me."

"Thank you very kindly, sir," answered Dasha-way, "but what will the other men of the crew think?"

"It doesn't make any difference what they think. To tell the truth, I never before sailed with such a crew. They are mostly all picked up from boarding-house masters, and they seem to include the scum of all nations. They are not like the ordinary American crews which I have commanded heretofore," said the captain, "but when the *Betsey* cleared, it seemed that every decent sailorman had been shipped out of the harbour."

"Yes, sir; we were rather short-handed on the *Young American*," said Bob.

"And under the circumstances, with such a crew, I would rather have you aft than not. I do not know what may happen before we reach Port Stanley, and I can depend upon you boys. I have tried your temper in the old *Betsey*."

"Thank you, sir," said Jack.

"What became of her, sir?" asked Bob.

"I sold her just after the war," answered the



“Perhaps you had better keep it, Captain Harper,” said
Bob, handing the parchment back (page 86)

captain, "and with my share of the proceeds and my share of the prize money from our adventure with the pirates, and with some that I could borrow from friends, I built this new and better ship in the hopes of making a fortune, or a competence, at least, for the wife and babies. We are going to trade down the coast and then plunge south of Cape Horn for seal, and by the way, boys, if the *Young American* does not pick you up, I will give you your 'lay'—share of the profits of the cruise, that is—with the rest of the ship's complement. It may make us all rich, and then again it may not."

"We don't care whether it does or not, we are so thankful for falling into your hands instead of a stranger. And anyway Uncle Joshua, Commodore Harkness, I mean, will find out what has become of us, and he will overhaul us somewhere, especially if we leave word everywhere we touch, as to our next point of destination," answered Bob.

"I think that is quite likely," said Mr. Harper, "now let us go on deck."

CHAPTER VII

CLAWFINGER'S STORY

IT had come on to blow early in the morning, and the watches throughout the day had been busy on the *Betsey*, making and taking in sail as the strength of the wind varied.

Like every American sailor, Captain Harper was in a hurry. He would carry sail to the last possible minute before he reduced the canvas, and did the wind show a sign of abatement he clapped on again. The breeze was not strong enough to need the services of both watches, but the watch on was kept busy and it was a pair of very tired boys who came rolling aft at the close of the second dog watch for their four hours in.

The captain had intended to question Master Clawfinger about the matter which had been discussed in the morning, and to which he and Mr. Rayton had given some anxious thought, but when he saw how tired and sleepy the youngsters were,

he ordered them to turn in and postponed his enquiries until the next day.

Having had the mid watch, the boys of course had the watch on in the morning. In the afternoon they were free, and when they had partaken of the substantial cabin fare with appetites grandly developed by the hard work and the fresh air of the sea, the captain summoned the mate, and the two gentlemen with the boys resolved themselves into what the commander was pleased to call a council of war. Bidding Mr. Harmon, the second mate, who had the watch, to send the sailor, Clawfinger, to the cabin, the captain cautioned the boys to say nothing except in answer to questions. He had brought out the famous map and laid it on the table, covering the torn portion with a book which he placed across it.

Presently the sailor who had been summoned descended the companionway, knuckled his forehead, and made a sea scrape in true man-o'-war fashion.

"What is your name?" began Captain Harper.

"I gener'ly goes by the name o' Clawfinger, sir," was the prompt reply.

"That is not an answer to my question."

"My other name's Joel."

"Were you born with the name of Clawfinger?"

"I was born with the thing, anyway," answered the man, sticking out his hand and exhibiting its hideous deformity.

"And you have no other name?"

"That's the name I go by."

"How is he entered on the ship's books, Mr. Rayton?"

"Joel Clawfinger, able seaman, sir."

"Humph," said the captain, "these young gentlemen have told me how they happened to meet you. They seemed to think that you were interested in getting something from the man who was attacked and whom they apparently rescued from severe handling."

"Aye, sir, you've got the rights of it."

"What was it you wanted to get?" demanded the captain swiftly.

The sailor was for the moment taken back. He had not expected the question and he was not prepared to answer. He halted, faltered,

shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, looked about the little group, the captain and Mr. Rayton close by, the boys farther back, and found nothing to say on the spur of the moment.

“Why I—er—as a matter of fact, sir, we—ah——”

“Was this what you wanted?” said the captain quickly, lifting the parchment in his hand, and holding the map so that the fact that a portion of it had been torn off could not be observed by any one.

“Sink me!” roared the man, his face flaming.
“You got it after all.”

Then he stopped again. The colour receded from his cheeks, leaving them their usual leathery tint. He glanced at the plan which the captain extended before his eyes, and with well simulated carelessness endeavoured to correct himself.

“I was mistook, sir, an’ thought you had some-thin’ else.”

“Ah! you did, did you?”

“Aye.”

“And what do you make out of this?”

Clawfinger reached out his hand to take it, but the captain refused to allow him.

"You can examine it while I hold it," he said.

"Seems to be a kind of a chart, sir, map of an island in the South Seas."

"Ah!" said Captain Harper. "What makes you think it is in the South Seas?"

The man sought to correct his slip, and did so with considerable adroitness.

"Why, sir, I've sailed in them seas, an' sich islands are gener'ly to be found thereabouts."

"You don't know the name of the island?"

"No, sir; 'tain't got no name, I guess."

Another slip that!

"How did you know it hasn't any name?" asked the captain, seizing the opportunity again.

"They don't gener'ly have no names, so far's my experience goes," was the ready answer.

"And you don't know the latitude or longitude of this one, then?"

"It is marked on the chart, ain't it?" came the careless answer.

"How did you know that?"

Clawfinger bit his lip.

"I don't know nothin' about it," he said dully,

determining to take refuge in assumed ignorance lest he betray himself further.

The captain looked at Mr. Rayton and nodded, whereupon the latter took up the tale and began.

"You might as well stop lying, Clawfinger. You have showed us pretty plainly by the admissions you have already made that you know a lot more about this island than you are willing to tell. We have a particular interest in finding out about it, and you are going to tell us all you know. See?"

"I don't know nothin' about it at all," answered the man stubbornly.

"You never saw this map before?"

"Never."

"You never heard of this island before?"

"No, sir."

"You don't know what is on it?"

"I can make a guess as to that."

"Ah! What is your guess?"

"Pa'ms an' cocoanuts, bananas, bread-fruit, pineapples, an' other tropic stuff, sich as you come across south o' the line."

"Ah! Why south of the line?"

"That's w'ere most of 'em lies in them waters."

"What waters?"

"South Seas, Pacific waters, o' course."

Mr. Rayton looked at the captain, who suddenly shot another question at the sailor.

"And what about the *Marigold*?"

"The *Marigold*, sir!" exclaimed the man, evidently fencing for time to think up some evasion.

"That's what I said. Plain English, isn't it? What about it?"

"Seems to me I do recollect a little yellor flower, which I knowed when I was a lad down East that had some sich name, but I never heerd of 'em growin' south o' the line," answered the man glibly.

"*Marigold* is a ship's name, I take it," said Captain Harper.

"Ah! a ship, sir."

"That's what I said."

"Well, it might be so; I've knowed ships as had the names of posies, an'—an'——"

"I have no doubt it was a treasure ship."

"Treasure!" exclaimed the man, his eyes gleaming. "Lemme have another look at that map, yer honour."

“You have had enough looks at it for the present. It doesn’t concern you,” said the captain coolly, folding it up and putting it in his pocket. “You know nothing about it, you never heard of it, never saw it, and therefore, have no interest in it. That’ll do.”

Although he received his dismissal, Clawfinger still hung in the wind, as a sailor would say.

“I beg yer pardon, yer honour,” he said at last, “but now I come to think on it, there was some talk o’ treasure. I oncet had a shipmate name Buntlin, Jack Buntlin—a Nantucket man. He was with Cap’n David Porter in the *Essex* frigate, an’ he had some adventures in the South Seas arter that ship was sunk by the British. Him an’ me was shipmates in a British whaler oncet. I came back to the United States an’ he stayed there. I overhauled him in New York a few days ago. He said somethin’ to me an’ a chancet acquaintance that we run acrost about havin’ picked up a chart of some treasure island down in Valparaíso, or some of them Spanish ports, an’ mebbe that’s it.”

“Ah! now we’re getting some light on the situation,” said the captain.

"I don't know nothin' about it personal, I never set eyes on it," continued the man.

"You don't know the latitude and longitude?"

"No, sir," said the man, "I've told you all I know about it. That may be it, or it mayn't be it, an'——"

"And you never heard the name *Marigold*?"

The man hesitated.

"Come, come!" interjected Mr. Rayton roughly. "We know you are lying. You have admitted that you were. Make a clean breast of it."

"Air you going down arter that treasure, sir, might I ask?"

"You might ask," said the captain drily, "but asking and getting an answer are two different things."

"Heave ahead with your yarn," said Mr. Rayton. "You have told us enough to enable us to see that you are holding back something and that you know something more."

"Do I git a share of it?" queried the man hoarsely.

"Everybody who sails with me gets a share,

and a fair share, of everything that is picked up."

"Well, sir, I've told you pretty much everything I know. Buntlin had this map, he got it in Valparaiso, just how, I don't know. It's a map of some island in the South Seas; what's its name an' where it lies, I don't know. Buntlin said there was a treasure there on it amounting to millions."

"And the *Marigold*, what about her?"

"I don't know nothin' about her, except she was the ship that had the treasure aboard. That's all, so help me Gawd," cried the man earnestly.

"Where is this island?"

"The latitude and longitude is set down on the chart, you can sail there yourself an' find out all about it."

And this was a third bad slip, at which the captain smiled, and continued:

"And this Buntlin was attacked by you and your friends?"

"Not by me, sir. Them young gents'll testify as how I didn't heave in sight until arter they'd fit off the other man an'——"

"I see," said Captain Harper, who had a shrewd

surmise that Clawfinger had been waiting until the other man got it away from Buntlin and then he intended to step in and take the packet himself—to despoil the despoiler, as it were!

“And you had no hand in the kidnapping of these boys?”

“Doesn’t look as if I did, sir,” answered Clawfinger, readily and convincingly, “when I’m yere myself. The mate, yonder, I make no doubt seed how we came aboard, sir.”

“You were all blind drunk, as insensible as logs,” said Mr. Rayton. “I can bear testimony to that.”

“You see, sir,” exclaimed Clawfinger triumphantly.

“Yes, I see,” answered the captain. “That’ll be all, you can go for’ard.”

“Beg pardon, sir; ain’t you goin’ ter make an effort ter git that treasure, an’——”

“You have no business to question me,” answered Captain Harper severely, “but nevertheless, I will give you a plain answer. I am not going to take my ship on a wild goose chase among dangerous and unknown islands of the South Seas

to hunt for treasure on the testimony of a map like that."

"But, sir," appealed the man, "my old shipmate, Buntlin, he was dead sure of it."

"That'll do," said the captain curtly, "get for'ard."

The man hesitated, looking viciously from one to the other of the little group, but in the face of a positive order from the captain, there was nothing for him to do but to obey. He turned and mounted the ladder and disappeared.

"There's a villain, if I ever saw one," said Captain Harper.

"No doubt," answered Mr. Rayton, "but I will say this for the man that he is a prime seaman, if I am any judge."

"Oh, yes, that's easily to be seen, but did you ever see a more vicious cast of countenance than he has got?"

"He has the look of a vulture," answered Mr. Rayton, "and with that claw of his he reminds me of the filthy bird."

"He is in the second mate's watch. Tell Mr. Harmon to keep a sharp lookout on him."

"Beg pardon, sir," said Bob, "but do you believe the story of the treasure?"

"I believe Clawfinger thinks it is true," replied the captain, "but as for myself, I gravely doubt it. Yarns of this kind are afloat on every sea. I've heard lots of them, and so has Mr. Rayton, I am sure. There is about as much foundation to them, as a rule, as there is to the bag of gold at the end of the rainbow; besides, whatever we might think of it," he lifted the parchment again, "we are helpless lacking the latitude and longitude, which, whether fortunately or unfortunately for us, somebody has torn off from the sheet. Without that information we can do nothing."

He studied the parchment again, turning it over and inspecting both sides minutely.

"It is too bad," he said at last, almost reversing his former decision. "There is just the bare possibility that there might be some truth in it." He stopped suddenly. "Mr. Rayton," he said, "take a look at this piece of leather again! Look at both sides of it. What do you make of it?"

Mr. Rayton stepped nearer the light and scrutinised the parchment a second time.

"I don't see anything more than I did before, sir."

"Look at the two sides, top and bottom, any difference between them?"

The mate studied the parchment long and earnestly, and turned it over.

"It is thinner," he said, "than ordinary parchment."

"Yes, and the top side is smoother and darker in colour than the under side."

"Yes, and the under side is rough."

"Right! Look at the edges."

The mate rubbed his hands carefully down the edges.

"Looks like something had been pasted to the back of it," he said at last.

"I take it," said the captain, "that that parchment has been split; see how these edges and the under side are rough, just as if it had been split originally, and then the split part pasted back, and now it is gone again."

"I believe you are right, sir," answered Mr.

Rayton. "Here, boys," he handed it over to the two youngsters, who were burning up with curiosity, "you take a look at it."

The two boys sprang to the ladder, stepped up a few rounds until the broad sunlight fell full on the mysterious map. They pored over it eagerly, and their bright young eyes discovered something more.

"Look here, sir," said Bob, turning to the other two, who had followed them, "looks as if there had been writing on the back of this parchment. Here is a dim black line."

"Here's another! You are right; there has been writing on the under sheet, and it has left a faint impression here and there on the top sheet," answered the captain, after another inspection.

"That'll be about it," said the mate.

"This makes it more interesting than ever," said Captain Harper. "Somebody evidently went to great care and pains to preserve some record of events connected with this island. The secret of the mystery is on the under sheet, I am sure, and if we had that we would know what to do."

"But if we had the latitude and longitude," said the mate, "it would be possible to sail there and find out ourselves, but having neither I guess the whole thing is like a sealed book to us."

"When I get back to New York, if I ever do," said Bob, "I am going to look up that man who was stabbed, if he is yet alive."

"And the chances of your finding that sailor-man, even if his life was saved, are millions to one."

"Yes, sir, I suppose so."

"Well," said Captain Harper, "we will put this treasure island story out of our minds. We have a strong, well-found ship, and if we have good luck we ought to come back with a fine cargo of sealskins and make money for us all. I wish I could have a body of down-easters, instead of this riffraff and ruffian crew we have aboard."

"And of all the possible scoundrels in the ship," said Mr. Rayton, "that Clawfinger will be the chief. I wonder how he came by so good and honest a Bible name as Joel."

"The crew is a pretty poor one," said the captain, "but I have an idea that before we have

crossed the line we shall have licked them into better shape. I have seen wonders accomplished with no better stuff than we have aboard. There's one consolation that in you and Mr. Harmon I have two excellent officers, and in the boys here, two youngsters whose mettle I know can be depended upon absolutely. I do not anticipate anything serious is going to happen."

"I hope not, sir," answered the mate, "but if it does, it won't be because we haven't kept a bright lookout. 'Forewarned is forearmed,' and it will be a sharp crew that will get ahead of us."

CHAPTER VIII

MR. RAYTON STOPS THE FIRST MUTINY

THE *Betsey* made an extraordinarily quick run to the line, which she reached thirty-five days after her departure from New York. You must remember that all of this happened long before the days of the great clipper ships of a generation later which used to make the line—the equator, that is—in three weeks or less! The run to Rio Janeiro, Brazil, was made at the same rapid rate. Touching there to discharge some cargo, to replenish his provisions, and to look for the *Young American*, Captain Harper left a letter with the American consul to be delivered to that ship, of which nothing had as yet been heard.

He offered to put the two boys ashore at Rio, and provide them with sufficient money to enable them to take passage to the United States in some home-bound vessel. Of course, there was no real, absolute certainty that the *Young American* was

on their tracks, but there was a sufficiently strong possibility to make the youngsters determine to stay with the *Betsey*, whose next ports would be Montevideo and Buenos Aires, whence they would run down for a last stop at the wild, desolate, and then almost uninhabited Falklands before the final plunge to the Antarctic Ocean. There was scarcely a settlement worthy of the name upon the islands at that time, but there were a few inhabitants, fishermen mostly, and on occasion vessels sealing to the southward or ships driven out of their course by the terrific storms that more often than not raged around Cape Horn stopped there to refit.

They met with no better fortune at the two stops in the River "Plate" (Rio de la Plata) than at Rio. Leaving letters as before, they then headed for the Falklands.

The long run south was made uneventfully enough, the luck of the *Betsey* still held, she was swept on by splendid winds, and proved herself a swift goer indeed. The boys had not been off soundings—i. e., in deep blue water—for over two years before, but they speedily got back their sea

legs and showed themselves daring and alert light-yardmen. The *Betsey* was well found and well provided, the discipline was firm but fair, the men were reasonably well content apparently, and everything went merrily, at least on the surface.

Clawfinger had speedily made for himself a place of considerable importance and influence in the crew. For one thing he was one of the best seamen on the ship. If he was sullen and hostile to the officers, he was friendship itself with the men forward, and he tried to be on agreeable terms with the boys, who, however, viewed him with growing distrust. He carried his opposition to the officers just about as far as he dared without crossing the line into mutiny. However, he did his work well, and as Mr. Rayton said, so long as he obeyed orders and did what he was told it did not make much difference what his thoughts were.

There was one peculiarity the man had of which everybody on the ship soon became aware, and that was the strength and power he possessed in that long claw-like talon from which he took his name. It was appalling. The two fingers together were thicker than two ordinary fingers of a man would

be if joined, and they were half again as long. There was something sinister and frightful in the sight of his hand, not when the finger was rolled round and curled up but when it was extended. It was as if an eagle's talon or vulture's claw were placed on a human hand. He could actually curl it around the mainstay and hold himself suspended in the air without a great deal of difficulty apparently.

The ship carried no boys except Bob and Jack—she was slightly undermanned, by the way—and although they did seamen's work, especially on the lighter spars and yards in their watch, the fact that they berthed aft and messed with the officers largely removed them from contact, and certainly from intimacy with the crew. Of course, occasionally in the second dog watch, the youngsters, boy like, would join the group of "yarners" on the forecastle, but there was not that freedom of delightful and respectful welcome which would have been accorded them on a man-o'-war, and they soon abandoned the practice.

They were fair navigators already, and Captain Harper, who was a conscientious man, assisted

by Mr. Rayton, a very competent observer, put the boys through a rigorous course of advanced navigation and also instructed them in the development of the fine art of seamanship.

They made the Falklands without difficulty, hove to off the port, sent a boat ashore with Mr. Rayton and the two boys in the stern sheets. The stroke oar of the boat's crew happened to be Clawfinger. There were several barques and schooners at Port Stanley, but a glance about the dreary harbour showed none of them to be the *Young American*.

There were no letters, of course, for the *Betsey*. If the *Young American* had stopped at Rio or Buenos Aires, she would have learned that the boys were on the *Betsey* and her last stopping place would be Port Stanley, to which, of course, she would have repaired at her best speed possible. The fact that she was not there and had not been there was somewhat disquieting. The *Betsey* was an extraordinarily fast merchant ship, but she was not believed to be equal in speed to the ex-privateer, which was undoubtedly one of the swiftest keels in the ocean.

By all odds if the *Young American* had started one or two days after the *Betsey* she should certainly have been ahead of her at the Falklands.

Captain Harper and the boys were thus placed in a dilemma. The season was already far advanced, and if the *Betsey* were to reach the South Shetland Islands and the sealing coasts to the southward in good time, she could no longer delay her departure. There was a chance, of course, that, unable to get track of the boys, the *Young American* had gone off about her own business, and if he waited for her, Captain Harper might lay his ship up at the Falklands indefinitely. He was part owner of the *Betsey*, but he had duties to the other owners and to the crew as well, who shipped for a small salary and a portion of the season's catch of seals. To put the boys ashore on these desolate islands on a chance of their getting a homeward bound ship was hardly to be thought of. Indeed, if the *Betsey* had a lucky season she would probably be homeward bound herself before the end of the year.

He advised them to remain with him, and with a somewhat heavy heart, the boys consented.

A letter had been prepared stating the destination of the sealer would be the South Shetland Islands. This was left at Port Stanley with a request that it be delivered to the *Young American* if she touched at the port and the boat returned to the *Betsey*. It was soon hoisted to the davits, the yards were swung, and the ship laid on her course.

Now, the wind was fair for a run down past Tierra del Fuego and Cape Horn toward the South Shetland Islands and the Antarctic Circle. The weather was unusually mild and the ship was under plain sail and making great headway through that most dangerous and tempestuous sea of all of the world. The Falklands had scarcely been dropped behind the horizon when Mr. Harmon, the second mate, who had the watch, was informed by a deputation from the crew that the men would like to speak to the captain.

Excluding the captain, the two mates, and the two boys, who lived aft, five in all, there were twenty-two men forward of the mast, including the cook and cabin steward. Sealing ships carried heavier crews than ordinary merchant vessels,

and this was a light crew, considering the tonnage of the *Betsey*.

Captain Harper at once came on deck. He was followed by Mr. Rayton and the two boys, who were all in the watch off. The men grouped themselves in the starboard gangway abreast the mainmast. Captain Harper, who was short but sturdy and powerfully built, stood with his hands in the pockets of his pea-jacket and confronted his crew with steady glance and level brow. The other officers stood back of him, Mr. Rayton being close at hand and the boys further away. Mr. Harmon on watch stood aft between the weather rail and the wheel.

"Well," said the captain, as no one appeared willing to break the silence, "you asked to see me; what do you want?"

He spoke shortly and sharply, for he did not like the sullen looks of the men. Still no one answered. It was not an easy matter to beard the captain on his own deck in his own ship after all. The natural spokesman would have been Clawfinger, but for some reason he kept himself well in the background.

Finally the sailmaker's mate, a rough and ready able seaman, who had been shipped at New York and who had as villainous a looking countenance as was ever seen on the high seas, broke the ice.

"We'd like to know where the ship's headed for," he began at first hesitatingly but got confidence as he went on, and ended with bold assurance.

Captain Harper controlled his temper. His eyes flashed but he said very quickly:

"When you signed it was for a cruise to the Antarctic Ocean after seal, was it not?"

"Yes, but——"

"What has induced you to suspect that I have changed my mind and the destination of the ship?"

"Nothin' at all," answered the man, "it's plain enough where you are goin'."

"Why the question, then?"

"Cause it ain't where we wants to go."

"Indeed!" said Captain Harper. "I have yet to learn what right the crew has to decide where the ship shall go."

"Oh! if you're talkin' about rights——" said the man sneeringly, looking about him at the faces

of the men as if to say that might was right and strength was on the side of the greater number.

"Howsomever, we won't press that p'int. We come before you as a dutiful an' willin' crew to ax something of you most respectful like," and if ever a man's attitude and bearing belied that adjective, they did so in this instance.

"Ah!" said Captain Harper, "we come now to the milk of the cocoanut, eh, Mr. Rayton?"

"I think so," answered the mate nonchalantly, lounging against the bulwark close at hand.

He had his hands behind him, but the boys noticed that both fists were clinched tightly.

"Well, heave ahead, my hearties," continued the captain to the crew.

"We've heerd tell," insolently resumed the sailmaker's mate, shifting his quid and nerving himself to a great effort, "as how you've come into possession of a map or chart of a South Pacific island somewheres which has got a ship's load of treasure, doubloons, Spanish pieces-o'-eight layin' loose on it for the takin'."

"Ah, indeed!" said the captain suavely, with a most suspicious courtesy and calm. "And how,

may I ask, did you come into possession of this interesting bit of information? ”

The sailmaker's mate looked around until his eye fell on the face of Clawfinger in the background. He beckoned with his hand and unwillingly enough Clawfinger came to the front.

“ He told us so,” he said.

“ So you have been yarning on the fo'c's'l, have you? ” asked Captain Harper.

“ Well, yer honour,” began the man respectfully enough but utterly unable to conceal the insolence in his heart, or possibly carelessly indifferent as to who might know his feelings, “ there was some talk about it natur'ly in the dog watches of a long cruise like this, and——”

“ And the long and short of it is,” interrupted the bigger man, “ we ax you to give over the sealin', which is a hard business an' a dirty business an' there ain't so much money in it, an' take a run over to this yere island an' ship the treasure aboard, an'——”

“ That's all, is it? ” asked Captain Harper as the man paused.

“ Ain't that enough? ” questioned the man. “ I

guess the latitude and longitude of that island is marked on your chart, an' we understand that——"

"Well, there are some things you don't understand," interrupted Captain Harper. "One of them is that I command this ship. Another of them is that I don't propose to be dictated to, or advised, by any crew afloat. I know my own business and I can carry it out without any assistance. I have heard what you had to say and you have heard my answer. Now go forward and let the watch on deck turn to and be quick about it."

He stepped forward, his head thrust out, and threateningly faced the group as he spoke thus boldly. The men fell back a little but made no other movement toward obeying orders.

"Are you goin' to' sail for that island?" roared the big sailmaker's mate, throwing the last pretence at subordination and respect to the winds.

"No, I am not," thundered the captain. "We are going to the South Shetlands."

"You'll have to work the ship there alone, then," cried the seaman in sudden passion. "Ain't that so, mates?"

"Aye," came roaring from the crew, "Wethers

is right, pickin' up Spanish dollars beats knockin' seals in the head, and——”

“ Mr. Rayton,” said the captain sharply.

Mr. Rayton understood. He had arisen from his lounging position against the rail, and in half a second he was by the side of his commander. Captain Harper nodded. The next instant Mr. Rayton leaped on the unsuspecting sailmaker's mate, and before he could open his mouth to utter a single curse, the mate's tremendous fist got him fairly on the point of the jaw, and he dropped like a log to the deck. The other men made an instant surge forward. Knives were drawn, belaying pins were grabbed from the main fife rail, but the surge was checked instantly, for the advancing men were confronted by a heavy pistol in Captain Harper's hands, another held by Mr. Rayton, to say nothing of two smaller ones drawn promptly by Bob and Jack, who both moved forward to their commander's side. The man at the wheel had abandoned the spokes the instant the men surged forward, and Mr. Harmon had grabbed them just in time to prevent disaster to the ship in the fresh breeze then blowing.

The captain did not give the men time to recover.

"Drop those knives and belaying pins to the deck," he roared, "or I will open fire! Are you there, boys?"

"We are right here, sir," answered Bob.

"Ready to fire when you give the word, sir," answered Jack.

The men stopped hesitatingly, but there was a wicked gleam of cold sunlight on the barrels of the four pistols and a wickeder gleam in the eyes of the two men and boys that held them.

"Drop those knives!" roared the captain again. "By the living God, you mutinous dogs, if they are not down on the decks by the time I count three, I will fire. One, two——"

The knives and belaying pins went clattering to the deck before Captain Harper could speak the word "three."

"Now, get forward!"

The men turned.

"On the run," added the captain.

The mutiny was over. From the time Mr.

Rayton struck until the time they broke, scarcely a minute had elapsed.

“Clap that villain in irons, Mr. Rayton!” said the captain, pointing to the senseless ringleader. “Jack, step below to my cabin and fetch up a pair of handcuffs and anklecuffs you will find hanging from the bulkhead.”

“Aye, aye, sir.”

“Now, Mr. Rayton,” he added, as the boy reappeared with the articles, with which the senseless man was promptly ironed, “call a couple of hands aft and stow this man below in the afterhold.”

By this time the sailmaker's mate had recovered consciousness. He opened his eyes and stared about him. When he realised where he was and what had happened, when he felt the irons on his hands and legs, he sat up and cursed fiercely.

“Belay that,” roared the captain, “you mutinous hound! You would try to run this ship, would you? Well, if you ever live to get back to the United States you will come near to hanging for your part in this morning's work.”

“Forward, there!” cried Mr. Rayton. “Two

hands lay aft, and throw this man down the afterhold, and one of you take the wheel. Whose trick was it?"

"Mine, sir," answered an able seaman named Fills, who came shambling aft, but no one else observed the mate's command.

"Why did you let go of the spokes, you infernal lubber?" said the mate, shaking his fist under his nose. "Don't you let me see you do a thing like that again! Get to your station!"

The man shrank past him in fright and terror. Mr. Harmon yielded the wheel to him.

"It is your watch, Mr. Harmon," said Mr. Rayton.

"Pass the word forward," said Captain Harper, who had looked on approvingly, "for two men of the watch to lay aft and bear a hand about it. Have them lower this man into the afterhold, give him enough bread and water to last him for the day, and leave him there."

"You, Clawfinger, fetch a man aft here," cried Mr. Harmon. "Shake a leg and come a-running."

The backbone of the mutiny appeared to be

broken. Clawfinger, with another seaman, came aft in a hurry. By Mr. Harmon's directions the hatch covering the afterhold was lifted, and Wethers, cursing and kicking, was dropped unceremoniously and roughly into it. The ship's cook provided a pannikin of water and a small bag of hard bread, which was placed beside him. The hatch was clapped on, and he was left to his own devices.

"Now, Mr. Harmon," said the captain, "we'll give the men something to do. They seem to be pining for work. Have the topmasts slushed, the rigging tarred down, the bright work scoured, and the ship painted wherever it needs it."

This was the nastiest and dirtiest work that could be given to a crew, and they were soon busily at it, but neither willingly nor cheerfully, it seemed.

The situation was sufficiently serious, Captain Harper realised. The sailors' sheath knives that were lying on the deck were thrown overboard, the belaying pins were replaced in the rails, and then Captain Harper, with Bob Dashaway, Jack Barrett, and Mr. Rayton, went below to discuss the situation. Before the captain left the deck,

he cast a long look ahead and to leeward. They were approaching the dangerous latitudes, and to the southward and westward black clouds were looming heavily.

“To add to our troubles,” he said, as he surveyed the horizon, “we’ll probably find a terrific gale of wind blowing off the Cape.”

CHAPTER IX

THE MUTINY IS RENEWED

THERE was no denying the serious character of the situation which confronted Captain Harper, his two officers, and the two boys. If he had been near enough to any civilised port to have made it practicable, Captain Harper would have put the ship about and headed for it at once. There he would have discharged his crew and endeavoured to ship a better one, or at least one in which there would be no knowledge of the supposed treasure, which had so inflamed the minds of the men. But there was no such port anywhere available. Here they were, a solitary ship, down near Cape Horn, off the most lonely, desolate, and dangerous coast in the world.

Captain Harper either had to yield the command of the vessel by acceding to the men's desires, or he had to continue on his sealing voyage. To give up the cruise would be to involve him in

more loss than he could by any means afford. Further, it would be a confession of weakness, ruinous to his reputation and intolerable to his pride. A captain who could not command his ship and master his crew was not in demand. Nor could he possibly comply with the wishes of the men, even if he so desired, for, as he and all those aft knew, the latitude and longitude were gone from the chart and to look for the island without them would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack.

It had occurred to the captain to show the map to the crew, and point out that the latitude and longitude were missing, but he realised instantly that they would accuse him of having torn off the corner of the map, and he could not establish his innocence. All these other possibilities being eliminated, there was nothing to do but to keep on.

No precautions could be taken except enjoining upon both officers and boys the grave importance of keeping strictest possible watch all the time and of never going on deck without being armed.

For several days nothing happened. The men

were as sullen and as insubordinate a lot in their manner and bearing as were ever gathered together; even the cook and the steward exhibited the same antagonism as the others.

The captain, with the assistance of the boys, who mingled more with the crew than the others, considered every man on the ship carefully, and did not find in any one of them anything which would lead him to rate him a true man.

Clawfinger, who was undoubtedly the ring-leader, behaved better than the rest. He obeyed orders with alacrity, though all of them promptly obeyed orders for that matter. It was necessary for them to do so, for they suddenly ran into one of the most furious of Cape Horn gales blowing directly westward and making a terrific lee shore out of the island, Tierra del Fuego.

Captain Harper did not desire to make any westing, since the whole end of the South American continent lay so close under his lee, and he made a desperate, hard fight to keep the *Betsey* from going on to that fearful shore. For five days she beat into the teeth of the storm, striving to make a good offing and to get far enough from

land for a clear run toward the South Shetlands. Several times the ship was only extricated from some rocky reef by the most skilful seamanship on the part of the captain and the officers and the most desperate work by the crew. All hands were more or less on deck all the time. The officers and the two boys never left the deck at all. The men could get some rest lying down between evolutions, but the group aft scarcely attempted to close an eye.

After a week of such buffeting, the officers were thoroughly down and out. The crew were in bad shape, but in much better condition than the others. The violence of the storm abated somewhat, and the peril from the lee shore grew less with every passing hour. No one had been able to take any observations of the sun, but the captain and the mates deemed that they were well to the eastward of the Cape at last. The captain, an oldish man, was almost dropping with fatigue. Mr. Harmon, a younger man of slender build, was in a worse shape; Mr. Rayton, a glutton for work and a man of prodigious strength, alone was in anything like good condition. The two young-

sters had enjoyed some sleep and they were more fit to stand a watch than the officers.

"Captain Harper," said Mr. Rayton at sunset the sixth day from the Falklands, "you have got to get some sleep, sir; I will take the first watch. You and Mr. Harmon go below, the two youngsters will stay with me."

Captain Harper hesitated.

"It is handsome of you to offer," he said hoarsely. "I really am about done for. If I can get four hours in my berth, I will be all right."

"I don't want to shirk," said Mr. Harmon, making a valiant effort, "but——"

"Lord love you, mate," answered Mr. Rayton, "you have done nobly. The Lord hasn't given you strength like mine; you go below with the captain, the youngsters here are as tough as sole leather," he laid a kindly hand on Bob and Jack, "they'll keep watch with me."

"We'll be glad to, sir," answered Bob; "you know you have made us turn in every night for an hour or two, and——"

"The boys and I will take care of the ship

until midnight," answered the mate. "Then I will call you, Captain Harper, and at four o'clock Mr. Harmon will be able to take his watch."

"I hate to do it, Rayton," said Captain Harper reluctantly, "but I must, and as you are the freshest of the three it will have to be the way you say. For God's sake, Mr. Rayton, keep a good watch, and you too, boys; the safety of the ship depends on you. I don't think there is much danger from the reefs," he added, looking forward where a little crew of men hung abaft the break of the forecastle talking earnestly among themselves, "but from the men."

"We have our weapons," answered Mr. Rayton, "and all that men and boys can do, we'll do."

"May God protect you!" said Captain Harper gravely.

He was a religious man and not ashamed of it. He turned and entered the cabin, and Mr. Harmon stumbled below to his berth. Mr. Rayton was left alone with the two boys.

"Stay aft here, Barrett," said Mr. Rayton. "Keep an eye on the man at the wheel. You come with me, Dashaway." He walked forward

into the waist and hailed the crew. "Eight bells!" he cried in his powerful voice. "The watch off may now go below"—all hands had been on deck all day—"it's going to be a murky night. I want a bright-eyed man at the foretopmast head.

It was apparent that the men off watch did not desire to leave their comrades who were to remain on deck, but there was something in the tone of the mate's voice and something more in the menacing glance that he shot at them that made the idlers break for cover. There was no hurry about it, but still what he wanted was done. One of the men detached himself from the group on duty and clambered up the forerigging, taking his place on the double-reefed foretopsail yard, where he carefully scanned the sea ahead.

The mate fearlessly went forward, although he kept his hand locked over the butt of his pistol in the pocket of his heavy pea-jacket, and distributed the rest of the watch at various points. As they were in dangerous waters, he placed a lookout at each cathead and one at each gangway. The heavy weather required two hands at the

wheel. There were ten men in the watch, and seven of them were thus disposed of. The rest formed a little group in the lee of the deck house or galley, and sprawled out on the deck as best they could, getting some needed sleep but still being ready for instant call.

"I hate to do it," said Mr. Rayton to the two boys, "but one of you must go for'ard on the to'gall'nt fo'c's'l. There are only two men there, both of them will be for'ard opposite the cat-heads."

Both boys immediately volunteered.

"Let me go, sir," cried Bob.

"No, it is my turn," urged Jack.

"Dashaway, you are a little the heaviest, suppose you go. Never mind, my lad," said the mate, turning to Jack, "you shall have your turn presently. I shall keep Dashaway there only two hours and give you the second trick; meanwhile, I shall need you aft with me."

"Very good, sir," said Jack, greatly disappointed.

"Now, Dashaway," said the mate, "as you know, there are only two men on the forecastle,

stationed at the port and starboard catheads. You take your station amidships with your back against the rail of the fo'c's'l, so that you can see the ladders at either side, and if either of the men for'ard of you leaves his station for any purpose, you order him back, and if he does not obey instantly, put a bullet into him. Is your pistol ready? "

" Yes, sir, ready and primed."

" Very good, remember the safety of the ship depends upon you. In two hours Barrett here will relieve you."

" Aye, aye, sir," whispered Bob.

The whole conversation had been carried on in a low tone so as not to be heard by any one on the deck. The youngster turned and ran fleetly forward. The two listeners heard him spring up the ladder and take his station.

Mr. Rayton walked aft to the quarter-deck. He did not ascend to the poop deck, but he sent Barrett up there with orders to the lad to watch him, the mate, like a hawk and see that nobody attacked him from behind. Mr. Rayton stationed himself on the quarter-deck so as to be in reaching

distance of Dashaway should the latter call, and also to be in position to oversee the steering of the ship.

Although the gale had abated it was still blowing very hard, and the wind was very heavy. The ship, under double-reefed topsails, was lumbering through the darkness at a great rate. It was getting darker and darker every hour. The weather was raw and cold in that high latitude, and presently a thick grey mist began to drive across the angry seas.

From time to time, Mr. Rayton, keeping his right side close to the rail and depending upon Barrett, who leaned over the rail above him, keenly alert, to watch his back, hailed the fore-castle.

“For’ard there!”

“Aye, aye, sir,” Bob Dashaway’s clear voice would ring out.

“Are you keeping a bright lookout?”

“Bright lookout ahead, sir,” the boy would reply.

Of course, Mr. Rayton knew that a bright lookout would be kept, but he wanted to know from

time to time that all was well forward. Thus passed an hour and a half of the watch. No bells had been struck in the storm, and the mate had about made up his mind that it was time for Barrett to go forward and relieve Dashaway. Thereupon he hailed the fore-castle, intending to direct the youngster to come aft.

“Fo’c’s’l there!” he roared.

There was no answer! The mate waited a second, and then cried out in his deep, powerful voice:

“Dashaway!”

Again there was no reply. The boy couldn’t be asleep. Something had happened. With a word to Barrett the mate leaped forward in the gangway, drawing his pistol as he started.

Bob Dashaway had rather a lonely watch of it. He was fearfully tired and frightfully sleepy, and it was only by the most superhuman resolution that he kept his feet and kept awake. It was the longest two hours that he had ever spent in his life. Toward the close of it the man on the lee cathead turned about and made a step toward the boy.

"Get back there!" said Dashaway determinedly, at once wide awake and on the alert.

The roaring of the wind through the top hamper kept his words from being carried aft.

"I jest want to git a light for my pipe, sir," said the man respectfully enough, but still continuing his progress aft.

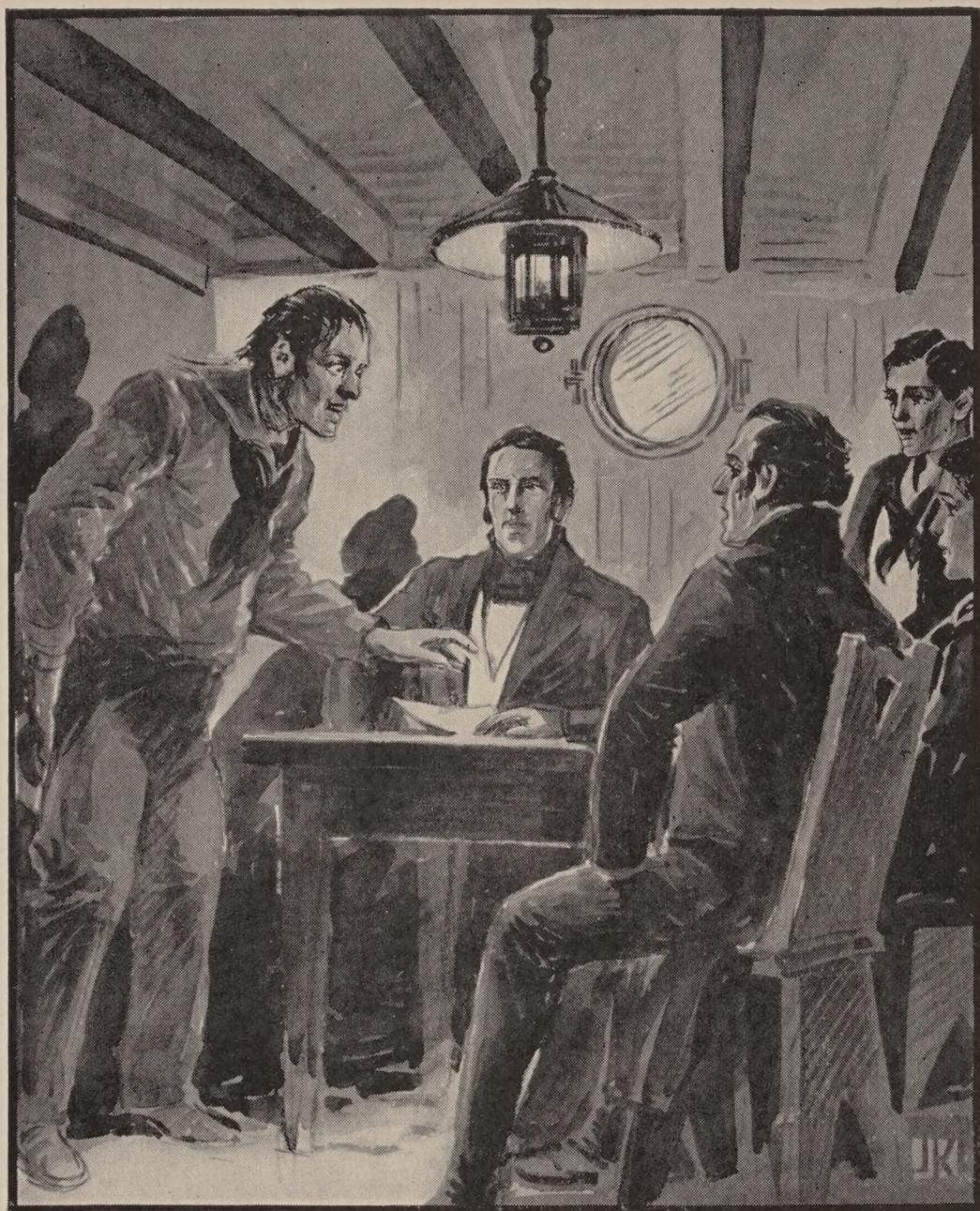
For answer Dashaway whipped out his pistol and levelled it at the man.

"Get back," he said shortly, "or I'll blow a hole through you."

"Come, come now, sir," returned the man persuasively, "you wouldn't go for to do a thing like that to a shipmate, an'——"

For answer Bob pulled the trigger. There was a snap, a flash in the pan, and for some reason the weapon missed fire. Bob opened his mouth to cry for help. At the same time he raised his hand to throw the pistol at the approaching man. The next second a black body dropped out of the heavens!

The man on the foretopsail yard had come sliding down the forestay right over Bob. He kicked out with his heavy-booted foot and struck



“Treasure!” exclaimed the man, his eyes gleaming,
“Lemme have another look at that map,
yer honour” (page 96)

the lad on the shoulder, throwing him violently to the main deck below. The next minute the man who had spoken was upon him, but Bob was incapable of resistance; he was knocked completely senseless.

Casting off the foreroyal halyards the man lashed the boy hard and fast. He had scarcely completed this work when the mate hailed, as has been mentioned.

The two men had hoped to accomplish their task before being called to account. They stood uncertainly. The next moment they made out the dark form of Mr. Rayton coming forward. He came on the run, but he was encumbered by heavy boots and his thick clothing, including the long pea-jacket necessitated by the inclement weather.

It was easy enough for a barefoot man, moving lightly as he stole out from the lee of the deck house unobserved, to overtake him. The pursuer's footfalls made no sound on the deck. He had a heavy belaying pin in his hand, and just as the mate reached the ladder leading to the topgallant forecastle, he struck him heavily across the back of the head.

The mate pitched forward, the ship gave a sudden roll, and he was hurled senseless and bleeding into the lee scuppers. Two or three men lashed him also; binding his feet, they then tied him to a ring bolt so that he would not be rolled around like a log by the unsteady ship.

Jack Barrett had heard the mate's hail, but noted that no answer came. He had then seen the mate start forward. What happened thereafter was invisible to him on account of the mist and the thick darkness. The mist was turning into a fierce, sleety, driving rain.

The boy halted after a moment's hesitation.

"Fo'c's'l! For'ard there!" he cried. "Mr. Rayton! Bob!"

There was no answer. He turned and sprang to the ladder leading from the poop to the quarter-deck. His pistol was out. Two or three forms suddenly appeared below him at the foot of the ladder.

"Is that you, Mr. Rayton?" cried the boy.

"Come down there, you young pup!" some one rasped. "Quick or——"

Taking sudden aim Barrett levelled his pistol

and pulled the trigger. There was a shriek, a groan, a curse, showing that somebody had been hurt. Two or three men sprung up the ladder, and in an instant the boy was seized and overpowered. He made a ferocious struggle, kicking and fighting manfully, but to no avail.

CHAPTER X

THE MEN MAKE CONDITIONS

THE shot, or the struggle, or both, immediately aroused the captain, who had lain down in his berth fully dressed so as to be prepared for any emergency. Seizing his heavy pistol he sprang to his feet, threw open the door, and entered the main cabin, which was dimly lighted by a hanging oil lamp. As he did so the outer door was thrust violently open, and several burly figures appeared in the entrance. The foremost was Wethers and without his irons. He had been released evidently, just how, did not at the moment matter.

Captain Harper levelled his pistol on the instant.

"Stay where you are, you mutinous scoundrels!" he cried.

"Cap'n Harper," began Wethers, "we are in possession of the ship. Mr. Rayton an' the two boys is lashed hard an' fast on deck. Mr. Harmon is sleepin' below locked in his cabin, an' there's

a man with a belayin' pin in front of it, an' if he sticks his head out he'll git his brains knocked out. We've come to have a leetle talk with you."

Captain Harper had the man covered with his pistol, and he kept him covered during his long and insolent speech.

"If I pull this trigger," he said grimly, "you will have no talks with me or with any one else in this world."

"Gimme leave, sir," said Wethers coolly, "that wouldn't do you no good."

"Why?"

"Becuz if anything happens to me, accordin' to my orders, the men for'ard will quietly drop the mate an' the two boys overboard lashed as they are."

"You villains! You murdering villains!" cried the captain, his face flaming.

"An'," continued the man imperturbably, "it wouldn't be long afore you'd foller suit yourself. Now you might as well be reasonable; we've come here for a talk with you, an' we're goin' to have it."

"Who's we?" asked Captain Harper.

"Me an' Clawfinger an' the crew."

"Ah! he is in it too, is he?"

"Not any more'n the rest of us," was the quick answer. "Now, are we goin' to have some plain free speech with you, or are we not?"

Captain Harper reflected quickly. In some way these men had got possession of the ship. He was one against a score. True, he had a pistol, but he suddenly discovered that one of the men before him had a weapon—the mate's had been picked up evidently. The captain could undoubtedly kill Wethers, the ringleader, and he could make a desperate fight against the others, but in the end he would be overpowered. And certainly if it came to a fight the men would surely kill him, and they would probably kill the mate and the two boys. "*While there is life there is hope*" is a maxim as true as it is old; while Captain Harper was living there were some things he could do; dead, he was useless. A living dog was better than a dead lion. Discretion was the better part of valour. To parley was necessary, in fact inevitable. He decided to try it.

"First I want to know what you have done to the mate and the two lads?" he said.

"The mate got a crack over the head, one boy had the breath knocked out of him, an' the other was beat up a little in a scuffle, but none of 'em has been hurt much; on the contrary, one of the crew, Fills, as good a seaman as lives, has been shot by young Barrett. But all this ain't neither here nor there, we're goin' to talk with you, an' we're goin' to do it now."

"Very well, then," said the captain, stepping to the head of the table and sitting down. "Those who are going to talk to me can come in the cabin and stand there."

He pointed to the open space at the foot of the table.

"Well, I guess we'll fix the conditions of the talkin'," began Wethers, entering the cabin, followed by Clawfinger and a few others, while the rest of the men crowded about the doorway.

"No," said the captain, "I will fix them! You will talk my way or you'll not talk at all."

"We will, will we?" menacingly.

"You will. Mr. Rayton, Mr. Harmon, and

I are the only navigators on the ship. I know what you want, it's that cursed treasure you're after. There isn't a man amongst you that can navigate the ship. You can't get along without us, so you will do as I say or we won't talk."

"We can kill you where you stand."

"Doubtless, but that won't do you any good. You need one of us, and as I am the only one that has the chart you are after, or knows where it is, you need me."

"Now what's the use of crossin' the old man?" here interposed Clawfinger suavely.

"Oh, very well," said Wethers sulkily, "have it your own way."

"Well, I want you to understand that I am to be captain of this ship hereafter as before, and I won't stand any more of your insolence. Get at the meat of what you have to say and be quick about it," said Captain Harper, whose pistol never left his hand.

"First of all, then, we wants that 'ere treasure chart. Next we wants a course laid for it as straight as this old hooker'll sail," was the not unexpected reply.

“ And what then? ”

“ Why, then we'll purceed to the island, load up with the treasure, come back to Valparaiso, or some Spanish port on the South American coast, we'll scuttle the ship near some port, take to the boats, every man will take his share of the plunder, we'll scatter, an'——”

“ What do I get out of it? What will my mates get out of it? What will the boys get out of it? ” asked Captain Harper, coolly enough.

“ You'll git your lives,” roared Wethers brutally.

“ No, no, not at all,” again interposed Clawfinger, who was the more adroit scoundrel of the two. “ If you serve us faithfully, we'll give you a fair share of the treasure and you can do what you like with it, just as the rest of us do.”

“ And if I do not accede to your terms? ”

“ We'll drop the prisoners overboard, you and Mr. Harmon can follow suit,” answered Wethers. “ Then we'll hunt the ship over until we git the chart, we'll pick up a navigator somewheres from some South American port, an'——”

“What’s the use of talking about that?” interrupted Clawfinger. “The cap’n is a sensible gentleman, he’ll do what we asks. It’s to his interests as much as ours.”

“And if I do,” said Captain Harper, “you will agree that none of us is to be harmed?”

Wethers growled out something but Clawfinger instantly replied in the affirmative.

“I will let you know in the morning just what I will do,” said the captain at last.

“You got to decide that now,” roared Wethers passionately. “Hand out that chart an’——”

“No, no, mate,” interposed Clawfinger again. “Give the captain time. If he’ll agree to hand over his pistol an’ stay in his cabin yere he can say what he’ll do in the mornin’. That’ll be time enough for us.”

“Hand over my pistol!” roared the captain suddenly—“not at the present stage of the negotiations. Now you clear out of the cabin, and do it quick! I will give you my answer in the morning. You can station all the scoundrels you want outside of the door to see that I don’t come out, but by the Lord, don’t let any of you come in here

until I give you the word except at his peril. And if a hair of the officers or boys is hurt, by the living God, I will fire the ship!"

He lifted his pistol again at the two men. Clawfinger instantly shrank behind the huge bulk of Wethers.

"In the mornin', then," growled out the latter, "you'll hear from us, an' we'll hear from you or there'll be trouble."

He backed out of the cabin adroitly enough and slammed the door.

Captain Harper ran to the door, which had been left unlocked, locked it, turned out the light in the main cabin, and retreated to his stateroom, the door of which he kept open and through which he could see the door that gave entrance to the deck. He sat down on a chair in the stateroom to think the matter over. Force was useless. If he refused to accede to their demands he did not doubt the men would do as they said. He could shoot one man and perhaps manage to do away with another, but against twenty or more he was helpless. His death would be a signal for the death of the two mates and the two boys. His

natural desire, of course, was to fight, but it was not to be thought of.

We know of old that Captain Harper was a resourceful man. He resolved to temporise and to try strategy. He unlocked his desk and drew out the map. He would have to hand it over in the morning. It had no latitude or longitude on it. What the men would think he could not be sure, but he could make a good guess. That they would accuse him of having mutilated it to render it unavailable, and they would kill him and the rest in an attempt to make him disclose the latitude and longitude was more than probable.

The only man aboard who had ever seen the map, except the officers aft, was Clawfinger. He had not enjoyed a very close look at it, and the captain had carefully concealed the torn corner from him. As he stood and stared at the chart an idea came to him. Among his other possessions was an old Bible bound in boards covered with thin, yellow parchment. He whipped out his knife, cut a sheet of the parchment from the cover, and trimmed it to the exact shape and size

of the original map and chart. He examined the two under the light; both were soiled and old. The colour differed and the texture of the leather, still no ignorant sailor would suspect a substitution, especially as there would be no chance of comparison.

Having this piece of parchment, Captain Harper, who was no mean map maker, proceeded to copy the old map on the newer leather: He had no red ink, but it was not difficult to open a vein and collect enough blood for the purpose.

The original map appeared to have been drawn on the parchment with some sort of a steel needle, and the captain had very little difficulty in making a very fair imitation of it, which in the absence of the original would easily pass muster among an ignorant and illiterate crew. In the corner he traced the latitude and longitude, making a guess at what would seem a likely spot for the probable location of such an island. Having completed this original forgery to his satisfaction, he dried it thoroughly, and examined his work with great pride.

He placed the latitude low enough and the lon-

gitude far enough west to give him plenty of time in which to take advantage of anything that might possibly turn up. He had to work slowly and with great care. It took him some hours to make the copy, and then after he had completed it, he rubbed it and crumpled it as much as he could to make it look older. He felt that he had done all that was possible.

A long time thereafter he sat quietly in the cabin, perfecting the plan, and thinking upon his course. He could tell by the uneasy pitching of the ship that the wind was rising again, and he grew anxious for daybreak, knowing as no one else on board did, the peril of these seas. A glance at his watch finally told him that half after five had arrived. He had extinguished his lantern as soon as he had made his map, and he could see through his cabin air ports the faint grey light of a cold, wet, stormy dawn outside.

Carefully concealing the original map in his desk, he picked up the facsimile and stepped out into the main cabin, went to the door, unlocked it, and threw it open. A sailor in front of the door lifted a marlinspike threateningly.

"It's all right," said Captain Harper. "I just want to speak with Wethers and Clawfinger."

"Wethers, Clawfinger!" bellowed the sailor.

Clawfinger came running aft from the lee of the galley with a tin pot of smoking coffee in his hand. Wethers, who had the watch evidently, turned the deck over to an old "A.B."* and followed.

"Come in," said Captain Harper, turning away from the entrance and taking his place at the head of the table.

The men entered the outer cabin and stood uncertainly.

"Here is the chart," said the captain. "Not so fast," he added as the two seamen started forward eagerly. "I have agreed to accept your terms, provided you accept mine."

"An' what are they?"

"I am to have the sole run of this cabin. The boys and the mates are to be sent aft here. I am to navigate the ship, and as such I am to have a right upon deck whenever I want to be there.

* Able seaman, that is.

Our meals are to be sent to us from the galley as usual."

"Granted in part," said Clawfinger. "You can have the boys with you, but the mates has got to go into irons in the afterhold. No, there's no use arguin' with us, Cap'n Harper," he continued as the captain opened his mouth to protest, "some of the men is for killing all of you out o' hand, but I don't want no murder done. The mates will be fed an' looked after proper, but we can't allow the three of you to be together. The boys is different. They are only youngsters, an' we can take care of you all right. It's that or nothin'."

"You promise me that the mates will be well treated?"

"I've said it an' I mean it. What do you say?"

"Very good," said Captain Harper, glad to have carried part of his proposal, being really helpless to carry any, "there is the map."

He pitched it across the table and the two men pounced upon it."

"It's jest as I told you, Wethers," said Claw-

finger excitedly, pointing with his hideous deformed digit. "There's the cave in the harbour—see that A—and you see what it spells, '*Marigold lies here,*' at the top."

He traced the words out slowly.

"I can't make nothin' out of it," said Wethers, "me not bein' able to read nor write."

"It's jest as I told him, ain't it, Cap'n Harper?"

"That's what it says," answered Captain Harper.

"Down yere in the corner is the latitood and longitood. You kin read figgers, I take it?"

"Aye, aye," said Wethers, slowly stumbling out the numbers as he scanned the paper.

"The man this plan was took from said he seen it, a whole shipload of ingots o' gold, with pearls and di'monds an' perecious stones an' pieces-o'-eight—Spanish dollars, you know, doubloons. Lord love ye, man, there's enough there to make every mother's son of us rich for the balance o' our lives. You couldn't hardly throw it away fast enough to git rid of it. There'll be enough for yer an' the officers an' the young gents, too," con-

tinued Clawfinger. "You done well, you've made a wise ch'ice, sir."

"Thank you," said the captain grimly, his fingers itching to pull the trigger and blow the ruffian out of existence. "Perhaps now you will send the boys aft to me."

"You can have the young cubs in a minute," growled Wethers.

"I'd like to have a chance to tell the mates about the arrangements."

"You can send one o' the boys to 'em, if you likes, arter we've had breakfast an' can git things settled down an' in order," said Clawfinger, turning away. "Meanwhile, we got ter git out on deck. All hands is on watch, an' in this thick weather, with this gale a-blowin' an' the shore under our lee, we can't be too careful."

"Indeed you can't," said Captain Harper warningly, "for if you do not look out, you will bring up on some reef, and then God help us all."

"We'll keep a sharp lookout, never fear," growled Wethers, turning away from the cabin.

CHAPTER XI

WRECKED OFF CAPE HORN

A FEW minutes after this Bob and Jack entered the cabin. Of the two, Bob was in much the worse condition. He had recovered consciousness, but his head still ached fearfully from the blow he had received, and his legs and arms were stiff and sore from the tight lashing that had been so roughly placed around him.

Jack was in much better shape, although he, too, had been rather hardly used. He had not been knocked senseless, however, neither had he been so tightly lashed. Both boys were very much ashamed of themselves. They seemed to feel that the seizure of the ship and the success of the mutiny was due to some carelessness or negligence on their part.

"Captain Harper," began Bob, "you can't think how mortified we feel at having let those men get the upper hand of us."

"Aye, aye, sir," Jack chimed in, "and we haven't any excuse at all to offer."

"You don't have to offer any excuses," interrupted Captain Harper kindly. "I don't exactly know how it all happened, lads, but I am sure both of you boys did your full duty."

"Thank you, sir," said Bob gratefully. "I had the watch on the fo'c's'l. We had a man at each cathead and one man aloft. By Jiminy," he exclaimed, turning to Jack, "that's what did it."

"What do you mean?" asked the captain.

"The man at the port cathead left his station, sir. I ordered him back, and as he didn't obey I drew my pistol; it missed fire. I started to throw it at him, but before I could do it something fell on me from the forestay and knocked me senseless."

"It was the man up aloft. You couldn't possibly have prevented that," said Captain Harper.

"And Mr. Rayton then hailed the forecastle, and not hearing anything, ran forward," said Jack eagerly. "Some one, I think, stepped out of the deck house and struck him with a belaying pin and knocked him senseless. I ran to the lad-

der and had my pistol out. The whole watch below had come on deck, they made a run at me, and I am sure I hit one of them, but well—here we are, sir.”

“And thank God, you are both here,” answered Captain Harper. “Our situation is desperate, but it is by no means hopeless. In the first place, they have no navigator among them, and it is impossible for them to reach the island they want to find without one of us. If they spare one of us they’ve got to spare us all; in fact, they have agreed to do so for the present at least. I have arranged with them that you two shall live aft with me here. I am to navigate the ship to the island.”

“But, sir,” began Bob respectfully, “asking your pardon for questioning you, you do not know the latitude or longitude of the island.”

“I’m guessing at it now,” smiled Captain Harper back at him.

“I don’t understand,” said the boy, greatly mystified.

“Last night,” explained the captain, “I made a copy of the chart, which I gave to them this morning. I put in a fancy latitude and longitude,

and we are supposed to be trying to find that.”

“ Well done, sir! ” exclaimed both boys, smiling brightly. “ And you have kept the real chart, sir? ”

“ Exactly,” answered the captain. “ I knew that if I gave them the real chart with the part torn off, they would accuse me of having torn it, and they would probably murder us all in the endeavour to get it, they would be so angry and disappointed.”

“ That was a smart trick, sir,” said Bob.

“ Well, we’ve played some tricks before, haven’t we, lads? ”

“ That’s right, captain, we certainly have.”

“ But excuse me, Captain Harper——” began Jack.

“ Speak your mind out, lad,” said the captain. “ This is a council of war and I want you to speak freely.”

“ What do you hope to gain by this trick, then? ” asked Jack.

“ Well, you see, I can sail this ship to that latitude and longitude, or I can sail it to any latitude or longitude I want, they’ll never know the differ-

ence. I may sail to the Sandwich Islands, for instance."

"Oh! I see," answered the boy, beginning to comprehend.

"And besides," continued the captain, "the thing we want now most of all is time, time to see where we stand, time to hit upon some better plan, to devise some definite course of action; that is the most important thing for us, and this little plan of mine will give us practically all the time we want. You understand that I put the latitude and longitude far enough away in the Pacific for a long voyage."

The boys laughed gleefully.

"Captain Harper, you are a wonder!" they exclaimed.

But the captain did not laugh in return; on the contrary, he looked exceedingly grave.

"Our situation is still most serious," he explained. "We three are to be confined to this cabin except when I am allowed to go out and take a shot at the sun and work out our position. Mr. Rayton and Mr. Harmon are stowed away in the afterhold, and I don't doubt they have double-

ironed them. The cook will furnish us such rations as he is willing to give us, and one of you boys has permission to go every day to see the mates with their meals. Of course, you have lost your weapons."

"Yes, sir," answered the boys regretfully; "they took them both away from us."

"Well, as it happens," said the captain, "I have a brace of very fine pistols in my cabin, which they know nothing about, and no man is to be allowed to come into this cabin under pain of death without my permission. If we could release Mr. Rayton and Mr. Harmon, we would have a fighting chance, but for the present we must play a waiting game. How is the weather outside?"

"Very thick and nasty, sir," answered Bob.

"Blowing hard, nearly a gale of wind, sir," replied Jack.

"And the mist coming down heavier every minute until it is almost like a rain," added Bob.

"I can see by the heaving and pitching of the ship that she is making heavy weather of it," said the captain. "And we are on starboard tack?"

"Yes, sir," answered Barrett. "Mr. Rayton

said he wanted to get as much sea room as possible, and he thought the shore was pretty close under our lee."

"Aye," said the captain, "that is our chief danger. If there's any current hereabouts, and I don't know from experience, because this is the first time I have ever tried rounding the Horn, it will be doubtless setting in shore. It would be a sad thing for us all if we should bring up on some of those deserted islands around the Cape. Fetch me the chart from the desk yonder."

When Bob brought it to him, he unrolled it, spread it out on the table, and studied it long and carefully.

"We ought to be about here," he said, pointing with his finger. "See how the land trends to the east'ard. I don't like it at all," he continued.

"Who will be conning the ship, Wethers or Clawfinger, sir?"

"They are both fine seamen," said the captain, "but still I think I will give them a word of advice. All I have on earth is in this ship and I don't want to see her piled up on Cape Horn."

There was a knock at the cabin door, and on

being bidden to enter the cabin, the steward came in with a pot of coffee and some ship's biscuits. He set them down on the table and promised more varied and substantial fare later, saying this was all the cook could do in the rough weather prevailing. He then turned to leave the cabin.

"Wait!" said the captain. "Ask Wethers or Clawfinger to come here for a minute."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the man, saluting respectfully enough as he went out.

Presently Wethers himself came into the cabin again.

"Well, what do you want now?" he snarled insolently.

"Look here," said the captain, pointing to the chart. "According to my calculations we are just about there. See how the land trends east'ard. Your true course will be due east or if possible to the north'ard of east."

"How the devil can we lay sich a course with the wind blowin' a whole gale straight from the east'ard?"

"Then you'd better keep her on the starboard tack for all you're worth."

Wethers studied the chart long and earnestly.

"You understand?" asked the captain.

"I understand," he growled with an oath, and turned and flung himself out of the room.

The captain shook his head, his jaw set grimly.

"My hands ached to clutch the villain by the throat while he was here and settle with him."

"It wouldn't be a bad plan, sir," said Bob eagerly, "and if they came in one by one, we could get all of them."

"We could probably get two or three that way, then the balance would come in a body and that would be the end of it. Well, let us have some coffee and ship's biscuits."

He produced cups from his private locker, shoved them along the table with a gesture, and invited the boys to fall to.

"I shall be on tenterhooks of anxiety," he said between mouthfuls, "until we get an offing and are able to round the Horn. Once in the Pacific, it will be plain sailing or at least until we get among the South Sea islands. Out here every moment is fraught with danger and every minute the danger grows greater."

He got up from the table and paced nervously up and down the cabin.

"By Heavens!" he exclaimed. "I would give anything to be out there on deck. There is so much danger, and those reckless ruffians are perhaps even now throwing away my ship."

He stepped to the door of his cabin, opened it, and looked out. A man armed with a belaying pin barred the way.

"I just want to take a look at the wind and weather," said the captain, standing in the doorway and staring ahead, the boys crowding by his side.

It was full morning now, but the air was grey with a misty, driving rain blown in wild, whirling sheets by the fierce wind which came screaming over the starboard bow. The yards were braced sharp up and the starboard tacks were boarded.

Since the men had seized the ship, however, there was a slovenly air about everything, something indefinable but still apparent to a seaman. Wethers had the watch and was lounging carelessly on the quarter-deck, getting such shelter as

he could from the bulwarks, the high poop deck being too exposed for his fancy.

"Wethers," said the captain.

"Say Mr. Wethers!" roared the man insolently.

"If you don't get your watch out and sweat those braces and sheets aft to the last limit, you cannot keep her up to the wind. Look at her now, see how she is falling off!"

"You tend to the navigation," said Wethers insolently, "and we'll sail the ship. Get back in there! There's no sun, you ain't wanted now."

Biting his lips to stifle his rage, Captain Harper stepped back.

"You promised to let one of the boys speak to the mates," he said.

"Aye," said Wethers gruffly. "Dashaway, you go for'ard to the galley an' git a pot of coffee an' some hard bread, an' take it below to the afterhold, an' don't linger around them mates neither; you git up on deck in a hurry, or I'll send below after you."

Bob Dashaway was a fearless boy. To go was something like trusting himself to a den of lions,

but he did not hesitate. He sprang past Captain Harper and the man who had given him the order. He got a pot of coffee from the cook and plunged down the main hatch and kept on going until he reached the afterhold. He made his way aft over the dunnage until he came to a comparatively clear space and there he found the two mates in double irons.

They were in entire ignorance of what had happened, of the details rather, and were greatly relieved to see him.

"I haven't a minute to stay," said Bob, hurriedly setting down the coffee. "Captain Harper made a false map of the island and gave it to them with some latitude and longitude on it; he has the real map still. They agreed to spare our lives if he would sail the ship to the island, and he agreed to do it. One of us is to see you every day to bring your meals. The captain says to cheer up and he will get us all out of the scrape yet."

"Next time you come below," said Mr. Rayton, "bring a file. Tell the captain we are all right and when he wants us we will be ready."

"Below there!" bellowed a voice. "What are you doin'?"

"I am coming, sir," answered Dashaway. "Hard job making way over the cargo with the ship tumbling so."

"Belay your jaw tackle, you young whelp," cried one of the seamen, "and git up on deck."

Bob made the best speed possible, but he was not quick enough to suit the sailor, who had a rope's end in his hand, and as he stepped out over the hatch combing, the sailor struck him violently with it. The boy's face flushed. He clenched his teeth, balled his fist, and for a moment made as if to leap at the man; indeed, so fiercely resentful was his manner and bearing that the sailor fell back a step, but Bob controlled himself. He knew there was no use in resenting the blow, so he turned and walked aft followed by the laughter of the sailors. Whether the laughter had been for him because he had been struck, or for the man who had failed to repeat the blow, he could not tell.

He said nothing to the captain about the blow; it was no use worrying the captain about little

things like that, but he delivered Mr. Rayton's message to the effect that the two were in double irons but otherwise all right, and if the captain would get a file to them they could file off the irons, and so would be able to free themselves, and he could count on them when he needed them.

"I haven't got a file," said the captain, "there's some in the carpenter's kit, of course, and probably one in the arms chest, but the key of the arms chest was stolen evidently. However, I happen to have a duplicate key, and we'll manage to get it to them presently somehow. Now, I want you boys to turn in and get some rest. I take it you were awake most of the night."

"We are not sleepy, sir," said Jack.

"I don't suppose you are, but it will be lots better for you and for me too, for you are my main dependence now, and you must be in good shape for any demand that may be made upon you." He pulled out his watch. "It is only six bells now. I don't suppose they will bring us any breakfast for an hour or two and an hour or two of sleep is worth a great deal; take it whenever you can get it. We must keep watch and

watch in here anyway. When I am sleeping you two must be on the alert, and now that you are going, I will keep the cabin."

The boys were more tired than they thought, for after dropping down in their bunks they immediately fell into a good, sound sleep.

Captain Harper paced up and down the cabin, thinking deeply. Various plans presented themselves to him; he pondered them long and carefully, rejecting them one after another, for none of them seemed to him to afford a way out of the tremendous difficulties in which they were involved. Nor was he able to think very clearly because of his ever increasing anxiety for the safety of the ship.

The gale was blowing harder and harder. A sailor sometimes realises things by instinct, and Captain Harper divined that the *Betsey* was setting to leeward all the time. He tried once again to go on deck, but permission was denied him. With oaths and curses, Wethers bade him go back into his cabin and stay there.

The captain took some comfort from the fact that Clawfinger and Wethers were both on deck

and that both watches were on the alert. He had heard the yards being properly braced, and he had had time to notice that the best hands were at the wheel, and that the ship was being steered with as great a nicety as if he himself had been in command; still he was not satisfied.

His uneasiness had evidently been communicated to Wethers and Clawfinger. The captain's position was most unhappy. A prime seaman, accustomed to depending upon himself in emergencies, he could scarcely endure being shut up in the cabin while two men, good enough seamen doubtless, but never before in command, had charge of his ship under such dangerous circumstances. If the fog had lifted he would have felt more at ease, but the ship was running wildly, and practically in the dark. He acknowledged himself that she had to keep on as she was, for with the wind blowing as it did, to heave would be to drive down on some lee shore. Perhaps she would go ashore anyway, for the waters thereabouts were terribly rough and filled with rocky islands and reefs.

Walking nervously up and down the narrow limits of the main cabin like a caged lion, his medi-

tations were suddenly interrupted by a frightened scream from forward.

The man on watch at the lee cathead was so startled and appalled by what he saw that he raised his voice so high and shrill that the captain, who was unconsciously expecting something of the kind, heard the hail above the roar of the storm. The cry was one of the most frightening and terrible of any that can come to the ear of a sailor, for this is what the man roared over and over in frantic terror:

*“Breakers! Breakers! Breakers ahead!
Breakers to port!”*

His voice rang out over the ship, sinister and appalling.

Captain Harper stood as if rooted to the deck. The ship had evidently become embayed in some of the islets. There should have been no land to port. Yet the man could not be mistaken. Clawfinger, who seemed to be the dominant spirit of the two in charge, acted promptly.

“Ready about!” he roared with a voice of tremendous power. “Down with the helm! Hard down and be damned to you!” he shrieked, and

then in rapid succession came the orders for the tacking of the ship.

Now it is no easy matter to tack a ship in such a storm. The *Betsey* shot up into the wind slowly and hung there in irons, a ghastly moment, and begun to fall off on the starboard tack again.

Captain Harper, who could follow every movement of the ship, could stand it no longer. He tore open the door and leaped through it, every instinct of a sailor aroused.

"Wear ship for your lives!" he cried as he reached the deck.

"Brace abox the headyards, and silence that fool," said Wethers.

Whereupon a sailor struck Captain Harper from behind with a belaying pin, and he pitched down on the deck senseless.

Clawfinger, the coolest of the lot, saw that the captain's advice was good. The men, thoroughly panic-struck apparently, stood around in a dazed condition, while Clawfinger frantically called them to shift the helm, to brace aback the headyards, in an endeavour to box off the ship, to swing her around through a great circle, back her up into

the wind, and head her away from that awful shore.

Cursing, yelling, and running forward, he finally got a few hands on the starboard forebraces, but before they could get the yards braced around the ship, which had been driving to leeward terrifically, was lifted up on a huge wave, her head booms sunk into a whirling mist of briny seas, and with a concussion and shock like an earthquake, she pitched terribly upon the rocks.

CHAPTER XII

THE END OF THE "BETSEY"

IT is hardly possible to describe the scene that ensued when the *Betsey* struck. The first receding wave dragged her off the reef, but the next huge roller lifted her high up and hurled her further on. The drive of the sea was terrible, the ship finally swung round and settled into a fixed position in some way, while the huge breakers thundered upon her side with tremendous power.

Bob and Jack were out of their berths on the instant. They tumbled out of the cabin, and as they did so the foremast went crashing over the side.

The survivors among the crew had huddled forward. Some of them had been killed in the forecastle when the ship struck the second time; a sharp, jagged needle of rock had torn the bows out of her and had been thrust into the forepeak like a gigantic hook, carrying death and destruc-

tion everywhere. The rest of the men had rushed forward when the ship stuck fast and now stood in the bows, staring panic-stricken through the mist and foam at the ragged, rocky shore towering above them. Then another dreadful thing happened. The fore and main masts suddenly went by the board.

The carrying away of the foremast, the fall of the heavy foretopsail yard, and then the main topmast, which also was dragged forward as it came down, overwhelmed the fore part of the ship, crushing and killing everybody forward. At the same moment an unusually heavy roller rushed across the forecastle and swept it clean of everything movable, living and dead. Not a man appeared to be left alive on the ship forward.

The boys stood in the door of the cabin, staring appalled at the ruin which met their view. The ship had settled, and but that she hung on the rock forward, would have sunk. The awful sea made a clean breach over her, rolling and grinding the heavy spars, still secured by cordage and rigging, in frightful masses on the deck and along-side.

"Great Heavens!" cried Bob, as soon as he could get his breath. "We are lost, there's not a soul left living on the ship."

"Two bodies lie yonder," said Jack, pointing to two figures rolling in the lee scuppers.

"One of 'em is the captain and the other Clawfinger," shouted Bob.

"Aye, we must get them aft."

The rise of the poop protected the boys somewhat. They did not feel the force of the wind or of the sea, which was now making a clean breach over the *Betsey*, until they got out from the lee of the cabin. Then they were almost swept from their feet.

"Wait," said Bob, pulling Jack back into the shelter of the quarter-deck again. "We've got to get a line fast or we will be swept overboard."

Fortunately the mizzenmast still stood. He tore off the royal halyards from the fife-rail and passed them securely around his waist, giving the fall to Jack.

"Take a half hitch around a belaying pin and pay it out as I want it," he said.

"All right," said Jack, "I'll keep it taut."

Thus watched and supported by his young ship-mate, who he knew would be as faithful as he was skilful, Bob slowly made his way forward, fighting against the wind and sea until he reached the body of the captain. He had with him the mizzen topgallant halyard in his hand. He made the rope fast around the body of the captain, then aided by Jack he pulled with all his might on the rope. The two boys at last dragged the prostrate, still senseless captain back to the quarter-deck.

Clawfinger lay in the waist. The boys did not know whether he was dead or not, but this time Jack went for him while Bob tended the halyards, and they succeeded in getting him also into the cabin. Both men were unconscious. The two boys stared at them.

"Great Christmas! What'll we do?" cried Barrett.

"We've forgotten the mates!" suddenly answered Dashaway. "I'll take the line again; help me to the main hatchway."

In a few moments Bob was at the hatchway that gave entrance to the hold. The noise of the waves

beating alongside was like continuous peals of thunder, but as he lifted the cover of the hatchway, which was secured by a hasp and staple and fortunately was not locked, he could hear shouts arising from below. As soon as the cover was off, Mr. Rayton thrust his head up immediately and gasped out:

“What has happened?”

“We’ve run ashore, sir; the masts are carried away, the crew has been washed overboard except Clawfinger.”

“Where is Captain Harper?”

“Senseless or dead in the cabin.”

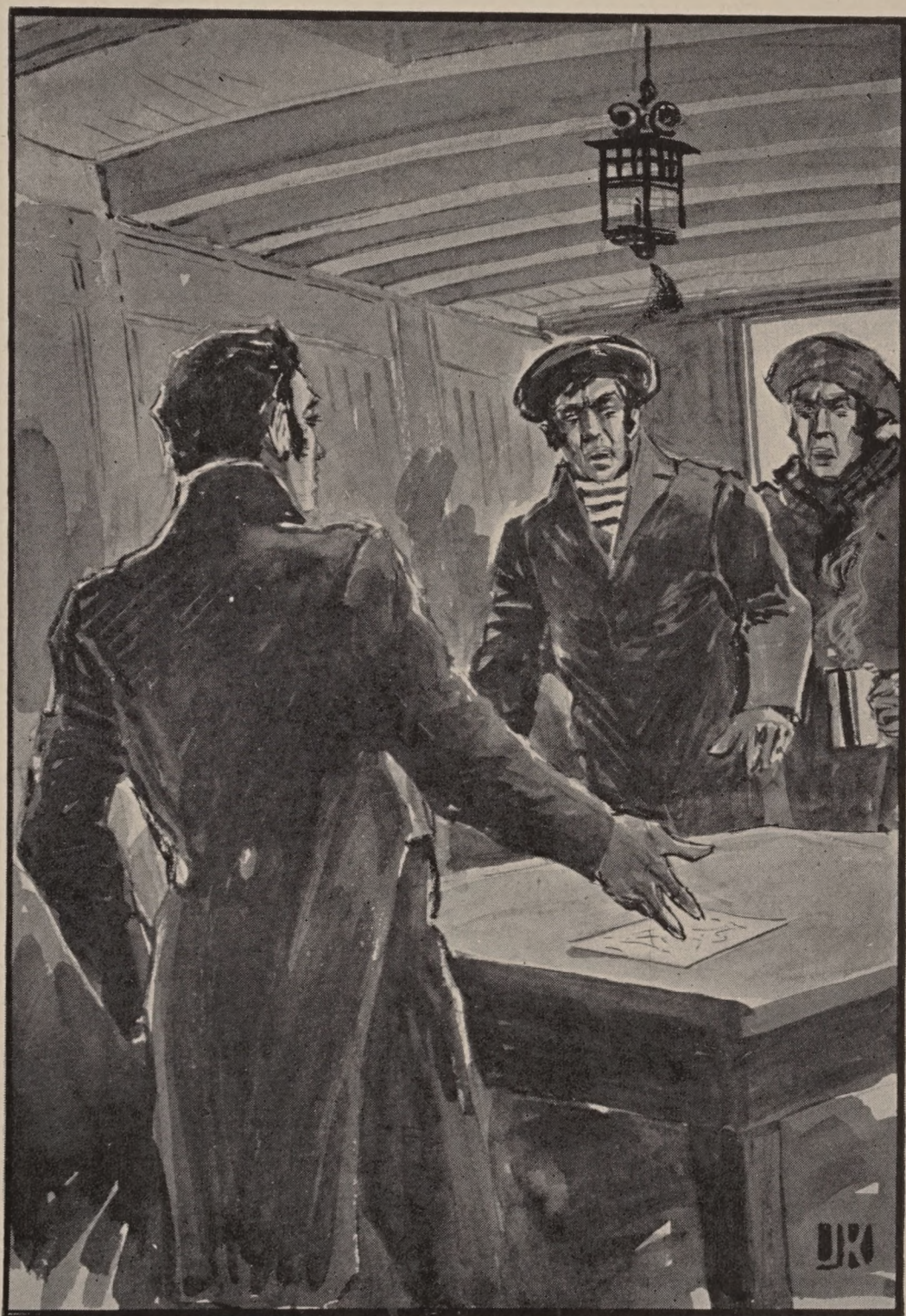
“Who’s left alive?”

“Barrett and I, sir, and you and Mr. Harmon.”

While this brief interchange of speech had been going on the mate, followed by Mr. Harmon, both being still in double irons, dragged himself to the berth deck. The three stood there a minute, the mate listening.

“She won’t stand this battering long,” he said, “I must get on deck and see what’s to be done.”

“You couldn’t keep your feet a minute, sir,”



“Here is the chart,” said the Captain
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said Bob, "in this wind and sea with those irons on."

"I must try it," said the mate.

"Well, sir," said the boy, "let me go first and I will bring you a couple of lines from the mizzen fife-rail, the mizzenmast still stands, and by means of them we can haul you aft one at a time."

"Heave ahead," said the mate, "that is well thought of."

It was hard work, but finally it was accomplished, and Mr. Rayton and Mr. Harmon were both safely landed in the cabin at last.

"I'd give a year of my life," said Mr. Rayton as he sunk down on a transom, "to get these infernal irons off. There's no file aft, of course?"

"No, sir," said Jack, "and the carpenter's chest is in his cabin abaft the forepeak, and it has probably been smashed to splinters."

"The captain said he had found a key that he thought would serve," said Bob. "He was going to give it to us to take to you, and——"

Mr. Rayton clanked over to the side of the

captain. The boys had laid him on the floor with a cushion for a pillow. He bent down and looked at him. He put his hand over his heart.

"It is beating," he said. "Here, get a towel from his stateroom and see if there is any whiskey in his locker; smash it open if necessary, you've got a belaying pin there."

Bob darted away, and presently returned with a towel and with a bottle. The ironed mate awkwardly wiped away the blood from the captain's face, opened the bottle, smelled it, tasted it, and lifting the captain's head, poured some of the spirit down his throat. The treatment was efficacious, for presently the captain opened his eyes. He stared about him bewildered a moment, and then asked feebly what had happened.

"The ship has struck, sir," answered Mr. Rayton. "She is fast going to pieces. Everybody except those of us who are here appears to have been crushed to death or washed overboard and drowned."

"Aye," said the captain, "I remember I heard her strike and rushed out, and then something hit me on the back of the head."

"Captain Harper," said Mr. Rayton earnestly, "if Mr. Harmon and I could get these irons off we could do something. One of the boys here said you had found a duplicate key; where is it?"

"In the little drawer of my desk in my cabin. I'm not sure, but I think it will unlock them."

Barrett ran for it instantly. Luckily the key fitted, and in a few moments both the mate and the second mate were free.

"Now," said the mate, stretching himself luxuriously after his long confinement, "first we must see what is to be done."

"Clawfinger, yonder," said Bob, indicating the other prostrate man.

"Give him some whiskey," growled the mate, "infernal villain though he is, and leave him to himself. We've got other and more important things to look to now."

This was soon done. Clawfinger seemed to have been more severely hurt than the captain, for he did not recover his consciousness. Making him as comfortable as they could the four stepped out

on deck, Captain Harper bidding them do what they could and not to mind him. He was lying easily on the deck, and said he expected to be all right in a short time.

These things had taken some time, and the squall which had arisen so suddenly and had wrought such disaster for them was sensibly decreasing by the time they had left the cabin. The sea still ran high, but it was not so violent as it had been, and while the deck was constantly awash the sweep of the water was not so overwhelming and terrific. Therefore, to get about was more practicable than it had been.

“Mr. Harmon, you and Barrett go below,” said Mr. Rayton, “and see what the condition of affairs is there. Dashaway and I will go for’ard.”

“Aye, aye, sir,” said the second mate, as followed by the boy he dropped down the main hatch while Mr. Rayton and Dashaway made their way slowly forward.

The mizzenmast still stood practically intact, although how or why it stood no one could fathom. The fore and main topmasts were gone, the fore-

mast as well. Forward was a scene of desolation indescribable. The bows of the ship had been battered in. The forecastle, sunk low on the rock, was filled with water; several bodies were washing about in it. The foreyard had crashed down on the forecastle, and still lay there. Two bodies, one of them that of Wethers, the ringleader in the mutiny, and the other the sailor Fills, were lying horribly crushed, pinned to the deck by the weight of the yard which had jammed in some way and had not been washed overboard.

The mate and the boy surveyed the scene in silence.

"She is ruined beyond repair," said the mate. "Do you see that jagged point of rock?"

"Yes, sir," answered Bob, shuddering with the horror of it all.

"She must have been lifted high by the wave and driven down upon it. It cut into the forepeak like a shark's tooth, and that's what holds us on the reef. When the pounding of the waves takes the bows out of her, she will slide off and sink."

"I see, sir," answered the boy.

"But from the look of things, if this sea goes down, she may hang on for some time. Meanwhile, it is evident there is nothing living for'ard." Mr. Rayton turned and surveyed the deck. "Lord!" he exclaimed, "the sea has made a clean sweep of her! Booms, boats, galley, spars, bodies, everything gone. Do you know the state of the tide, boy?"

"No, sir."

"If we ran on at high tide, when it ebbs the stern will sink and maybe the weight of the ship will drag us away. If we struck on the ebb, the rise and fall won't make much difference. In fact, the ship is hung on a hook."

"Have you any idea where we are, sir?" asked Bob.

"Somewhere to the east'ard and north'ard of Cape Horn, that's about all. Maybe near the Straits of Le Maire. When the wind goes down, if it ever does, and the mist clears away we can get a shot at the sun and find out."

"Do you think we are apt to be picked up, sir?"

"Not one chance in a million," answered the

mate. "Wherever we are, we are ashore, and ships give such shores wide berths as a rule. Come, let us go aft, we will get after these bodies later."

Mr. Harmon and Barrett were climbing over the hatch-combing as the other two came abreast the afterhatch.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Rayton.

"Everything forward is stove up and gone to pieces," was the answer.

"How about the water casks?"

"There are some aft which have not been stove and are still tight apparently."

"And the ship's stores?"

"Salt water's got into most of them, but there is food enough for the present," answered Mr. Harmon.

"Nothing living between decks, of course?"

"Nothing."

"Very well, then," said Mr. Rayton. "Let us go aft to the cabin."

They found Captain Harper sitting up. He had worn a heavy fur cap when he went out, and that had saved his skull from being fractured from

the blow that had stricken him down. His face had been terribly cut and bruised, and his nose had been broken in the rolling about he had received while lying helpless on the deck. He was very white, and his head ached frightfully, but aside from the pain and the disfigurement there was nothing serious the matter.

"Well, gentlemen?" he exclaimed, his head in his hands.

"Thank God, you are coming to all right," answered Mr. Rayton.

"I shall be able to turn to presently," said the captain. "What did you find?"

"Well, sir," answered Mr. Rayton, "the ship is stuck on a ledge of rocks. I felt two shocks, and on the second one she appears to have been lifted up by a roller and slammed down on a huge, jagged point of rock, which crashed in through the bows and which rises nearly to the floor of the forecastle. She is hanging there like a fish on a hook. As long as she holds forward, she'll hang. It was a sharp squall evidently that drove us on. The wind is going down visibly, the sea is still running high but not like it was. It is

possible to move around the decks, although they are all awash. There are several bodies washing around in the forepeak, and there are two, of whom one is Wethers, pinned down to the deck by the foreyard which fell on them. The bowsprit, of course, is gone; there is a stump of the foremast left about six feet high, the main topmast is gone, and the main yard is down, with the other spars washing alongside, the mizzenmast still stands. There is not a boat left, and the decks have been swept clean of everything, including galley and deck house, sir."

"Barrett and I have been below, sir," said Mr. Harmon. "There are a few water casks not yet stove up; provisions are generally spoiled by salt water, but there is enough to make out on for a while."

"What is the first thing to be done, Mr. Rayton?" said the captain, still not quite clear in his mind.

"Clear away the wreckage, sir."

He stepped to the bulkhead and took down an axe, which was securely fastened there. Mr. Harmon at a nod followed his example.

"You boys stay aft here with the captain," said Mr. Rayton, passing out of the door, followed by Mr. Harmon.

"Look to the sailor, yonder," said Captain Harper, regarding Clawfinger earnestly. "He is a desperate, mutinous villain, but we can't let him die. How is he?" he continued as Jack Barrett bent over him.

"He is still living, sir; that is, he is breathing hard."

"Dashaway," said the captain, "help me to my feet."

Assisted by the boy, Captain Harper finally arose. He was frightfully giddy and dizzy and violently sick, but he managed to control himself. He stepped over and sat down on a transom by the body of the sailor.

"If I felt better," he said weakly, "I might do something. As it is, do you give him some more of the whiskey. We will make him as comfortable as we can under the circumstances, and then I will try to get out on deck."

The two boys obeyed the captain's commands. Bob wetted a towel and wiped Clawfinger's pale

face, they gave him some of the spirit, and then Captain Harper, having taken a dram himself, the boys helped him out of the cabin. He stood leaning in the angle made by the break of the poop and the lee-rail and surveyed the remains of his once handsome ship.

“Boys,” he said at last, “as you know, everything in the world I own is ruined.” He bit his lip for a moment, lifted his eyes to the grey skies as if in prayer, and then went on more composedly. “But our lives have been mercifully spared, and I have no doubt these wretched and mutinous sailors who have wrecked my ship would have done for us all in the end; therefore, we should be thankful to God for our escape. When a man has life and health and a brave heart, nothing can go very wrong in the end.”

Forward, the mate and Mr. Harmon had been plying their axes vigorously. The cordage which held much of the wreck alongside had been cut and the most of it had washed or drifted away. Smaller pieces had been shoved aboard. In some way they had succeeded in raising the foreyard a little and dragging from beneath it the bodies

of Wethers and Fills. These, too, they had cast overboard. The ship was a desolate picture, of course, but nothing like what she had been before.

Presently having done all they could forward, the two officers came aft. The wind was cold and raw, and it was very misty, enough to drench those unprotected to the skin, but the two men had laboured so that they were in a warm glow, their faces covered with sweat.

"There!" said the mate, "that's done. I am glad to see you on your feet, sir, and able to take command. Have you any orders?"

"Yes," said the captain, "we must all get something to eat, and then we'll talk over our course. The wind is abating, I think."

"Decidedly so," answered Mr. Rayton, "and hark to the sea, it is not nearly so heavy as it was."

"It is heavy enough in all conscience," answered the captain, listening to the waves beating along the weather side.

"Aye, sir," said Mr. Harmon, "but the thunder of it is much less alongside than it was. If it

grows no worse, I think the ship will hold until the next storm."

"And if the wind goes down," added the mate, "and the weather clears as it promises, we can get a sight of the sun and tell where we are, and then——"

"All in good time, gentlemen," said the captain, "but at present, we can do nothing. It is a long time since we have eaten. Mr. Harmon, will you and the boys see if you can't rout out something for us to eat and drink? Mr. Rayton, you and I will go into the cabin to counsel together."

CHAPTER XIII

THE COMMODORE IN A PLEASANT MOOD

"IN all my voyaging," said Commodore Harkness, impatiently pacing the weather side of the quarter-deck of the *Young American*, to Mr. Truefitt, the young officer who was the mate of the ship, who happened to have the watch, "I have never met with so many vexatious and yet unavoidable delays. For instance, the loss of the mizzen topmast in that hard gale in the run to Rio, which brought us there the very day after the *Betsey* sailed, then that cursed clumsy collier that ran into us while we were at anchor and stove in the port bow almost to the water line and laid us up at Buenos Aires for ten days, just when I could have almost given the ship to get on. I've got the fastest keel in these waters, yet when we put into Port Stanley day before yesterday, we found the *Betsey* had been gone three days! Now I suppose there is nothing to do but to run down

to the South Shetlands, and try to pick her up there."

"I guess not, sir," answered Mr. Truefitt. "We certainly have had bad luck."

"Of course I've got to get those boys if I have to follow the *Betsey* to the South Pole. It is most vexatious and annoying to have to lose all this good weather while we hunt about in the Antarctic seas for two harum-scarum youngsters."

"But they couldn't help it, sir," suggested Mr. Truefitt deferentially, as became a mate's address to his captain.

"No! no! I know that. I don't blame the boys," was the answer.

The old commodore did not enjoy having his cruise disturbed and his time wasted even if nobody that he could lay his hands on was at fault. But pleased or displeased, he had to get his youngsters back, there was no disputing that.

"We are fortunate in this fine weather though," he resumed after a little pause. "I have never experienced anything quite so good in these waters, I believe."

"Well, sir, from the look of the sea and from

the feel in the air, there's been a wet storm hereabouts, I should say, although it is pleasant enough now."

"I agree with you," said the commodore, swinging about and looking over the side of the ship, where the rough blue water sparkled brightly beneath the morning sun.

As he did so his eye roamed along the distant shore. The breeze was blowing fresh and strong from the southward. The ship was on the port tack, making a short leg toward the land. The commodore gazed at it steadily. He had no love for lee shores even in fair weather and under bright skies. He was too far off to see anything more than the faint loom of cliffs and hills or distant mountains from the deck.

"I think I should not stand on this tack much longer, Mr. Truefitt," he said at last. "I don't like to get too near that rocky coast yonder. You have a hand aloft, I suppose."

"Certainly, sir, Jack Buntlin. He's an old man-o'-war's man, and I guess he has about the best pair of eyes on the ship; besides, I gave him my glass."

"Where is he?"

"On the foreroyal yard, sir."

The *Young American* was under all plain sail at the time.

"By your leave, Mr. Truefitt," said the commodore, who was very particular as to the etiquette of the quarter-deck, "I will hail him."

"Certainly, sir."

The commodore hollowed his hand and spoke through it, his voice pealing trumpet-like through the ship.

"Foreroyal yard, there!" he roared.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Keep a sharp lookout ahead, we're drawing something close to that land."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"And may I ask, Commodore," said Mr. Truefitt, "after we have picked up the *Betsey*, if we are fortunate enough to overhaul her, what our course will be?"

"Well," said the commodore, "I think I have about given up my original plan of running around the Cape of Good Hope. I think I will round the Horn and then up along the South American

coast, touching at Hawaii and doing a little trading wherever we can pick up a little freight, and then making a straight run for Macao and thence to India and back home by the Cape of Good Hope."

"That'll be just reversing your original plan."

"Exactly," said the commodore. "You see we are so far to the eastward now it would hardly pay to double back across the Atlantic to Cape Town, and by the time we get to the Shetlands, we shall have made so much southing that the other way will be the easier course."

"It will make it easier for us to round the Horn, sir," assented Mr. Truefitt, "being so far south of it."

"Well," said the commodore, "I have rounded it several times in my life, and it is generally hard enough in any latitude."

"I have been around once," said the mate. "We made it in twelve days from fifty degrees south latitude in the Atlantic to fifty degrees south latitude in the Pacific."

"That was a fine run," said the commodore,

"but I have beaten it; I have made it in nine and a half."

"I believe the *Young American* could do it in eight or eight and a half," said Mr. Truefitt admiringly. "She is the fastest ship I have ever sailed on, sir."

"Aye, and the fastest I have ever sailed on, and I've sailed on many, man and boy, in some fifty years of cruising."

"You know, sir, our Yankee ship-wrights have just begun to build ships; before another generation passes over our heads, I predict that we shall have revolutionised naval architecture."

"Aye," answered the older man, "we've got the fastest ships on the ocean now and we are turning out better and swifter ones every year. There was nothing afloat when she was launched that could overhaul the *Young American*, given the proper kind of wind and weather, but I have no doubt there are quite a number of ships could show us their heels now on the wind or going free."

"Well, maybe, sir," answered Mr. Truefitt doubtfully, "but I've never come across them."

"If I had my boys safe aboard again," said the

commodore at last, "I should be perfectly happy."

"I should think so," answered Mr. Truefitt. "You have a smart, well-found ship, a ready and willing crew of prime seamen with a veteran and experienced commander like yourself——"

"And don't forget," interposed Commodore Harkness pleasantly, "as fine a group of young officers as I ever sailed with, and I have sailed much and with fine men."

"Thank you, sir," answered the mate.

Commodore Harkness was ordinarily a reserved man, but the fine, splendid air of the fresh, brisk morning, the fact that they would probably run down the *Betsey* within the next few days and get the boys back, that his anxieties would be over for the cruise, put him in a cheerful, complacent, and talkative mood.

Mr. Truefitt was a favourite officer of the Harkness & Dashaway line. His rise had been rapid, and as he was the son of an old friend, Commodore Harkness had chosen him especially for his first officer on this cruise, which really combined pleasure with business. The commodore was rich enough and willing enough to have under-

taken the voyage merely to gratify his own desires, even if there had been absolutely no money whatever in it, so the two gentlemen passed the next half-hour or so in pleasant conversation.

The *Young American* had been approaching the land at a great pace. At last its rough and jagged outline rising above the horizon could now be distinguished from the deck. It looked stern and forbidding indeed. After a pause in the conversation, the commodore stared shoreward long and hard.

"We are in about fifty-four degrees south latitude, I should say, Mr. Truefitt," he said at last. "The land trends sharply to the eastward here and but little is known of it. I think the Straits of Le Maire open to the east of us. I don't want to run them. That point yonder ought to be Cape San Diego. She must get enough easting to weather Cape San Juan on Los Estados Island, the easternmost point of the Continent. We'd better go about, sir."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Truefitt. He lifted the trumpet dangling from his wrist, placed it to his lips, and roared out:

"Ready about! Stations for stays!"

The men, who had been idling upon the deck in the pleasant morning, instantly awoke to life and action, but before Mr. Truefitt could order the helm a-lee, the deep voice of Buntlin came roaring down to the deck from the foreroyal yard:

“Sail ho!” he cried.

CHAPTER XIV

RESCUED

"KEEP fast the tacks and sheets, Mr. Truefitt," said the commodore instantly, "and steady with the helm."

"Keep all fast," roared Mr. Truefitt through the trumpet.

"Now, sir," said the commodore softly, "find out what has sighted for'ard."

Mr. Truefitt walked rapidly along the weather gangway until he cleared the main tack. He threw back his head and hailed the foreroyal yard.

"Aloft there, what do you see?"

"A sail, sir; leastwise it is the mast of a ship."

"Where away?"

"Broad off the lee bow, sir."

"Can you see it with the naked eye?"

"No, sir, but with a glass it is quite plain."

"What do you make of it?"

"It looks like it rises from a rock, sir. It shows a flag Union down."

"What flag?"

"The United States, sir."

"Can you make out anything else?"

"No, sir. It may be set up on shore, but it is a ship's mast."

"Can you see a hull?"

"No, sir. There is a smother of foam on the rocks at the foot of it."

"Jump aloft yourself, Mr. Truefitt," said the commodore, who had followed the officer forward in his impatience, "and see what you make of it. I will take charge of the ship."

"Very good, sir," answered the mate, handing the trumpet to the commodore and springing up into the fore rigging.

There wasn't a sailor on the ship who was more active and alert than Mr. Truefitt. Scrambling over the futtocks, in a few minutes he reached the crosstrees, and presently took Buntlin's place on the royal yard. Through the glass he ogled the spot indicated by the sailor long and earnestly.

"Well, sir! Well, sir!" roared the commodore at last.

"It is a ship's mast, sir; a mizzenmast. I think

it rises from a ship's deck, although I can't be sure of that from the smother of foam. They are in trouble whoever they are, for the ensign is Union down."

"Very good," said Commodore Harkness; "lay down on deck, sir."

Mr. Truefitt disdained the shrouds, and came sliding down in a few seconds by one of the back-stays.

"Well, sir," said the commodore, after hearing the report, "it is some ship that has been driven ashore, some American ship."

"Looks as if she's wedged on the rocks. She should be about our own size, and——"

"By Heavens!" exclaimed the commodore. "Suppose she should prove to be the *Betsey*!"

"That's the only American ship that we know of around here, sir, although, of course, she may be some homeward bound whaler coming the other way, and——"

"Whatever she is," said the commodore, "her people are in distress and we'll have a nearer look. Call all hands, sir."

"Dethridge!" shouted Mr. Truefitt.

"All hands on deck," roared the old man, shrilly piping the call.

"I want the best men on the ship on lookout, I will take charge myself, sir," said the commodore, turning aft. "You go to the fo'c's'l and keep a bright lookout for breakers. We'll run in as close as we dare and then heave to. Better get the men at their stations for tacking in case we have to bear up, sir."

The old commodore ran aft with surprising agility, acknowledging the salutes of the mates as they hastened to their stations. The ship was a scene of animated bustle for a few minutes until the watch below got on deck and ranged itself handy for the various sheets, tacks, and braces.

"Forecastle, there!" roared the commodore when silence had supervened.

And it was silence. The old man did not allow the usual jabbering that went on in ordinary merchant vessels, his discipline was strictly of the man-o'-war type.

"Aye, sir," came back the answer.

"Have you got a hand on the foreroyal yard still?"

"Buntlin is there yet, sir."

"Tell him to keep a bright lookout for breakers, the safety of the ship depends upon him."

"Very good, sir."

The commodore ascended to the weather side of the poop deck, leaned far out, and peered anxiously ahead. The ship ran on for perhaps three-quarters of an hour longer, when the quiet, in spite of the suppressed excitement on board, was broken again by a hail from the foreroyal.

"I can make her out now, sir," was the cry.

"What is it?" asked the commodore.

"It is a hull of a ship. There are figures on the deck. They are dipping the flag. They see us, sir."

A sudden cheer burst from the lips of the crew.

"Very good," said the commodore. "Keep your weather eye lifting."

A quarter of an hour longer and Buntlin hailed again.

"There's a line of reefs between us and the ship, sir; they're not more than a mile away. I can see the breakers plain."

"Very good," said the commodore.

He seized the glass and surveyed the shore line. He could see the breakers himself now; they were about as near as they dared to go, he decided.

"Ready about! Station for stays!" he roared.
"Down with the helm! Rise tacks and sheets!"

The commodore put the *Young American* on the other tack before he hove her to so that her drift would be away from, rather than toward the shore. When the ship's mainyards were backed, he called Mr. Truefitt aft, turned the deck over to the second mate, and bade his first officer take the cutter, the heaviest of any of the ship's boats, except the launch amidships, and board the wreck, which was now in plain sight, scarcely more than a mile away.

"There are natives on these islands hereabouts, I have heard, who are very savage," added the commodore. "Your men had better be armed."

"Very good, sir," answered Mr. Truefitt.
"Dethridge!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Call away the first cutter."

The commodore liked to keep up the naval

boat names with which he was familiar, even in this merchant ship.

“Lay aft all you first cutters to go ashore,” roared the boatswain.

“May I go with them, sir?” asked Dethridge, as the men came tumbling aft.

“If Mr. Truefitt has no objection.”

“I’d be glad to have you along,” said the mate, stepping in the stern sheets of the boat, where the boatswain followed him.

They had passed several anxious days on the *Betsey*. There was absolutely nothing they could do. The shore was bleak, bare, and desolate; no evidence of life appeared. That morning the sun shone brilliantly, and the wind fell to a whole sail breeze.

The captain and the mates had about decided that their only course would be to take the wreck of the dinghy, which still hung from the davits astern, repair it, build up its gunwales, try to make it unsinkable by means of empty water casks, and should the weather moderate sufficiently, try to row it or sail it back to the Falklands.

The captain had mainly recovered from his wounds, and the others were feeling fit for anything. There was sufficient supply of provisions and water for some time, and they had not stinted themselves.

Clawfinger had at last recovered consciousness, but two of his ribs were broken, which rendered him of little service. He was very contrite and very humble, and as he was so weak, sick, and helpless, he had been allowed to occupy a cabin, where the others gave him such attention as was necessary.

The captain and Mr. Rayton had discussed the probability of being seen by a passing ship, and they had decided that the chances were very small indeed.

The mate and Mr. Harmon were tinkering around the dinghy, getting her ready for the voyage when the sea should go down. The captain was preparing to take an observation to try to find out where they were. The boys were breaking out provisions with which to stock the dinghy for their voyage.

"Captain Harper," said Dashaway, setting

down a box of hard bread and wiping the sweat from his forehead, "may I go aloft, sir, and take a look at the offing?"

"Certainly," said the captain. "Here," he handed him his own glass, "you can see further with that than with your naked eyes, bright however they may be."

"May I go with him, sir?" asked Jack.

"Go ahead," said the captain, laughing.

The boys had worked like young heroes, and the scramble up to the mizzen topmast crosstrees would lend a little variety to their life and would do no harm and it might do some good.

Slinging the glass over his back by its lanyard, Bob, followed by his messmate and shipmate, sprang into the starboard mizzen shrouds which were fortunately intact. The two boys scrambled over the futtocks and into the mizzen-top. They rested there for a few moments, and more from habit than anything else, Bob unslung the glass, put it to his eyes, and swept the horizon to seaward. At one point he stopped, his jaw dropped, and his mouth opened.

"What is it, Bob?" asked Jack.

"By Jiminy," said Bob, "I think it is a ship! There, you take it!"

He handed Jack the glass. With nervous haste the boy focussed it and took a long look.

"Great Christmas! It's a ship's royals, if I ever saw any," he said, handing back the glass. "Shall we hail the deck?"

"Let's go higher and make sure," said Bob.

Together they raced up to the crosstrees. Twinning his arms around the mast to steady himself, Bob looked through the glass again.

"It's a ship," he said.

He handed the glass to Jack, who was close at his side.

"Aye, a large ship on the port tack and coming fast," answered Jack.

Bob stared up to the masthead where the flag, Union down, rippled out in the strong breeze. As they could see so they must certainly be seen, he decided.

"Deck there!" he shouted.

"What is it?" asked the captain.

"Ship in sight, sir," answered Bob, "on the port tack and coming down fast."

"Hooray!" yelled Mr. Rayton, dropping his axe and springing into the rigging.

"You can see her from the top, sir," said Dashaway, sliding down a back-stay and handing the glass to the mate.

"Boy's right, sir," yelled Mr. Rayton in great excitement.

"Has she seen us, think you?" asked Captain Harper.

"If we can see her, she can see us, you may be sure," was the reply.

"Let us have the glass again, Bob, if Mr. Rayton is through with it," cried Jack from the cross-trees above.

When he got it he took another long survey. The incoming ship was approaching at a great rate, much more of her upper works were visible now than before.

"Well, what do you make of her?" cried Captain Harper at last.

"I am not sure, sir," answered the boy triumphantly, "but I think she is the *Young American!*"

CHAPTER XV

THE STORY OF THE TREASURE

To say that Commodore Harkness was happy when he got his boys back is putting it mildly.

Mr. Truefitt had managed to find a passage through the rocks with his cutter; he had easily boarded the unfortunate *Betsey* and taken from her the surviving members of her crew, including the youngsters.

Captain Harper and the mates saved their personal effects and the ship's papers. Before he left the vessel he hauled down the American flag and brought that with him. It was a matter of some little difficulty to get the helpless and suffering Clawfinger into the cutter, but they finally managed it. It was a glad party that at last stood on the decks of the *Young American*.

Bidding the officer of the watch to fill away, Commodore Harkness took the three officers of the *Betsey* and the two boys down to his cabin,

whither Mr. Truefitt also came. It was a long story that the youngsters had to tell, but they had plenty of time at their disposal and a group of eager listeners.

Captain Harper took up the tale from the time the boys were put on shipboard, and with many respectful corrections and suggestions from the others, the exciting account of the adventures through which they had passed was related. When it was all finished and the story was complete, Commodore Harkness asked a single pertinent question.

"Where," said he, "is the map of the treasure island?"

"Here," answered Captain Harper, pulling the little oilskin packet from his pocket.

He opened it, took from it the precious parchment, and handed it to his host.

Commodore Harkness scrutinised it long and earnestly.

"As you say," he remarked, "it has been split, there are traces of writing on the back, and the corner containing the latitude and longitude is gone. You say you got this from the sailor you

tried to rescue?" he continued, turning to Bob.

"Yes, sir."

"Well," said the commodore quietly, "it happens, curiously enough, that that same sailor is on board this very ship."

"What!" exclaimed Captain Harper.

"On board this ship, sir?" asked Mr. Rayton.

"Why," said Bob, "we left him dreadfully cut up."

"He is all right now," said the commodore, smiling, "and we'll have him aft. Mr. Barrett, step outside and present my compliments to the officer of the watch and ask him to pass the word for Buntlin to report in the cabin."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Jack, scampering away.

Presently Jack Buntlin entered the cabin, knuckled his forehead, and waited in some anxiety for whatever might be about to happen.

"Buntlin," said the commodore, tossing the map down toward the foot of the table where the man stood, "did you ever see that?"

"Did I ever see——" began the sailor diffidently, bending forward, and then as his eye took

in the document, he fairly roared through the cabin, "It's the map of the treasure island!"

"Aye," said the commodore, "it's a map sure enough, but part of it is gone."

Buntlin tore open his shirt frantically, fairly ripping the buttons off. He drew out from a pouch suspended around his neck a little oiled silk bag tied up like that in which Mr. Harper had kept the map. With nervous fingers he broke the lashings; the next instant he threw on the table a little triangular piece of parchment.

"That's the missing part," he cried, forgetting his manners and everything else in his excitement. "That Clawfinger devil you brought on board in the cutter wormed out of me that I had the map. I knew that he would try to steal it somehow so I tore off this corner an' kept it separate from the other."

"Will you hand me that little piece of parchment, Mr. Rayton," said the commodore, "and the map?"

Mr. Rayton picked them both up and passed them to the head of the table where the old com-

modore was, and as he did so he fitted the torn piece to the other.

"It is a perfect fit, sir," he said, laying both pieces down on the table.

"Aye," remarked the commodore, "so it is. We have got the latitude and longitude of the island now, gentlemen."

"That ain't all, sir," continued Buntlin, "there's this that goes with it." From the same bag he extracted another sheet of parchment exactly the same size and shape as the first. This was a thinner piece and it was covered with quaint, old-fashioned writing.

"What is this?" asked the commodore.

"This is the back of that map. You see, sir, when I tore off the corner, I discovered that the parchment was two pieces pasted together in some way an' hammered until they looked like one. I split it myself. Not bein' very good at readin', howsomever, I ain't never made it all out rightly, the letters bein' so old-fashioned an' kinder confusin', an' the writin' ain't bright like the map, neither."

The commodore scrutinised it carefully. It was

covered with fine old writing in black ink. The ink was considerably faded, and at first sight he could make little of it. He laid it down opposite the map and the torn piece for future reference.

"This begins to look interesting, Commodore," said Captain Harper.

"Very," answered the commodore. "We'll set our wits to reading it when we have time; meanwhile, perhaps you will tell us how you came by this, Master Buntlin."

"Willin'ly, sir," answered the seaman. "You see, sir, I was bo's'n's mate on the *Essex* frigate when Commodore Porter took her 'round the Horn an' showed the American flag in the Pacific."

"And a mighty plucky thing it was to do, eh, Harper?" said the commodore.

"Very," answered the captain.

"I was wounded when the *Essex* was cut to pieces an' set fire to by the *Phæbe* an' the *Cherub*, w'ich they would never ha' done if they'd fought fair, sir," protested Buntlin earnestly. "They took us at a disadvantage."

"I know," said Harkness kindly. "Commodore Porter is a friend of mine. I have heard

details of the fight at first hand from him, and I would like to hear your story of it some time, but not now. Go on."

"Well, sir, I managed to git ashore somehow or other, an' then I must have fell senseless, for when I come to, I was in a Spanish house in Valparaiso, an' they told me I'd been sick for two months. I'd picked up some Spanish in Cuby an' the West Injies an' had a little money left, an' they treated me white, but when I was able to git out, the English ships had give Captain Porter an' the survivors of the crew the *Essex Junior* as a cartel, an' I suppose I was reported as dead; anyways they was gone. Well, sir, there I was, stranded in a South American port with not a chancet on earth to git home. Presently along come an English whaler short-handed. I was an American, but they was glad enough to ship me. I'd done some whalin' in my time, arter the big fish out o' Salem an' New Bedford, that's where I met old Bill Dethridge, your bo's'n, an' I shipped aboard her. I was very glad to git among white folks myself, an' as we was cruising west'ard, I knowed I'd never have to fight agin my own flag,

besides the cap'n promised to transship me if we spoke any American ship, which was unlikely as there was none in them waters as I knowed."

"I am not disposed to blame you," said Commodore Harkness, as the seaman paused rather nervously.

"Thank ye, sir," said Buntlin, "specially as I wa'n't any too strong an' wa'n't gettin' no stronger there."

"Well, what next?"

"Not much, sir. One day, I reckon it was not far from the latitood and longitood marked on that there chart, we picked up a kinder curious native canoe that had been hollered out of a big log. There was a man in it. He was a Spaniard an' he was pretty far gone, starvation an' thirst an' exposure. We took him aboard, an' as I was the only one of the crew that could speak Spanish, the cap'n turned him over to me. He was a sick man, a dyin' man, I may say, sir. I didn't quite git the rights of his story, but as near's I could find out, he'd been the cap'n of a Spanish schooner. He'd chartered a boat, or got control of it somehow, to go out an' hunt for treasure. He said

that somehow he had come into possession of a map of an island on which there was an English treasure ship. The map had been in his family for years, but he'd only had it a short time, an' he fit out this schooner to go an' fetch it. As near as I could make out, sir, the schooner was wrecked on the identical island on the map, an' he was took prisoner by the natives, which was fierce and war-like. He managed to steal a canoe one day an' git away from the island, an' drifted around for weeks in the calm water, slowly starvin' an' thirstin' till we picked him up, and that's all the story, sir."

"You mean——"

"I mean he died ravin' mad the next day."

"And the map?"

"He give that to me afore he died, said I was good to him, an' he had no kith or kin, an' mebbe I could git it myself."

"What was his name?"

"Francisco Silva, sir."

"Commodore Harkness, with your permission, sir," said Captain Harper. "My man, did he say that the treasure was there?"

"He did, sir."



The next huge roller lifted her high up and hurled her further on (page 174)

“Had he seen it?”

“Yes, sir; the wreck of a ship,—an English ship, it is in a cave on that island, right there, I take it——” Old Buntlin laid his thumb on the spot to which the legend referred. “He said it was chuck full of bars of gold an’ silver with pearls an’ jewels an’ sich like, an’ the ship was crammed to the hatches with it. The natives made a kind of a god of it an’ left it alone. Your honours, I can see him now, with his face a-flushin’ an’ his eyes a-burnin’ with fever, a-ravin’ about that gold in Spanish, an’ me the only man in the fo’c’s’l as could understand him. He was that ragged and dirty that the officers took him for a common sailor an’ berthed him for’ard, an’ them Britishers wa’n’t none too good to him. He disturbed them at night with his moanin’, an’ in short, that’s the whole story, sir. When the war was over, I transhipped to an American trader at Canton, an’ come on home by the way o’ the Cape o’ Good Hope. I’d jest landed in New York an’ met up with Clawfinger an’ his mates, an’ the rest of it, ye know.”

“A most remarkable story, indeed,” said the

commodore, "and you believe, do you, that this Spanish citizen, Francisco Silva, was telling you the truth?"

"As there's a God above me, I do, sir."

Now Buntlin was a very sober, reliable sort of a man, not given to exaggeration, and his solemn declaration made a great impression upon the little group in the cabin.

"And you say you have never been able to decipher the reading?"

"I don't rightly know what decipher means, sir, but there don't seem to be any 'rithmetic on it."

"I mean you have never been able to read it?"

"Not all of it, sir, it bein' in writin' which I don't read it very well, but it seems to me, sir, that it is about a ship called the *Marigold*."

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen," said Mr. Harmon, who was a college man, "but I have studied old documents a little, and if you will give it to me I will do my best to make it out."

"Very good," said the commodore. "Have a try at it, Mr. Harmon. That will do, Buntlin."

"Beg yer pardon, sir," said the sailor, shifting

uneasily, "but are yer goin' arter that treasure, sir?"

It was a question in which all present had a definite interest. The commodore hesitated. The same thought was in everybody's mind, and the air was charged with emotion. Bob and Jack were on tenterhooks of excitement. If Bob had dared he would have interposed, but he knew that his uncle would brook no interference or suggestion from him or anybody, unless it might be from Captain Harper.

"What do you think, Captain Harper?" said the commodore. "I have taken your judgment before and I know it to be good."

"Well, sir," said Captain Harper, "the man tells a perfectly plain story; he has confidence in it himself, and if we can persuade ourselves that the treasure is there and this ship were mine, I should try for it."

"Humph!" said the commodore smilingly. "Well, Captain Harper and gentlemen all, if I can persuade myself that the treasure is there, we will have a try for it."

"Hooray!" cried Bob irrepressibly, and the

next second Jack joined him. The commodore was greatly scandalised.

"Silence there!" he cried severely. "What do you mean, young gentlemen! I am surprised at you."

"Beg your pardon, sir," said both boys promptly, "but——"

"That'll do," said the commodore, who evidently was not half as angry as he appeared. "Well, Mr. Harmon," he began, "what did you make of the document?"

"It is written in old English, sir, the kind that prevailed two hundred and fifty years ago, I should say. I will write out an exact translation of it presently, but as near as I can make it out now it is from the master of an English bark, *Marigold*."

"Aye, now I remember; she was one of a fleet commanded by the great Francis Drake, the English sailor, when he made his great voyage around the world," cried Captain Harper, slapping the table. "I recall it all now. The name was familiar to me all the time and I could not quite place it. She got separated from the rest and has never been heard of since."

“You are right, sir,” said Mr. Harmon, “and here is her story. She got separated from Drake’s fleet after passing through the Straits of Magellan and was driven far to the westward by heavy easterly gales. Working up northward toward Manila, she fell in with a treasure ship, a Spanish galleon, among the Philippine Islands. I have not made out the name of the ship yet, but she was captured after a smart fight in which she was badly damaged, her treasure was transshipped, and she turned adrift with her crew. It seems that the captain of the *Marigold* turned back, endeavouring to make his way to England through the Straits of Magellan or around the newly discovered Cape Horn. His ship got badly shattered in a storm and was driven to this island of which he has made a map. An earthquake or a tidal wave lifted her up, tore her from her anchors, and drove her into a cave. His crew was drowned or murdered, and this was written or committed to a bottle by the master, who was the last survivor. It is signed with his name ‘Nicholas Anthony.’”

“Looks genuine now, Captain Harper,” said the commodore.

"Perfectly, sir."

"Very good," said the commodore decisively. "Then we'll round the Horn and run up to this island to see what we can find."

Bob opened his mouth, unmindful of his former rebuff, to let out another yell, but the vigilant commodore got him just in time and transfixed him with a heavy frown.

"Buntlin," said Commodore Harkness to the sailor, who was still in the cabin.

"Yes, sir."

"You are willing to trust this document to me, I suppose?"

"Of course, your honour."

"You can tell the whole story to the crew if you like. You haven't mentioned it to any one aboard, I suppose?"

"No one, 'ceptin' Bill Dethridge, sir, an' me an' him bein' sich old shipmates."

"Very good. Well, you can tell the whole crew the whole story now. After we have had time to examine the maps further, I will let you show them to the men. You can say to them from me, that if there's any treasure there and we get it, we will

divide it among all hands in accordance with the prize laws of the United States."

"That's most handsome of you, sir," said old Jack Buntlin, his eyes glistening.

"Not at all," said the commodore, "it is only fair."

"Thank ye kindly, yer honour," said Buntlin, making a sea scrape and leaving the cabin.

As he did so, Commodore Harkness' eyes fell upon Captain Harper, whose face looked rather blank. The commodore perceived what was in the gentleman's mind.

"Captain Harper," he said, "and gentlemen," turning to the other two officers, "you surely do not think for a moment that you will not share in this treasure, if treasure there be?"

"We have no claim upon it, of course," said Captain Harper.

"I am not so sure about that," said the commodore, "but whether you have a claim or not, you are going to have a share just like the rest. Your share, Captain Harper, will be exactly the same as mine, and, Mr. Rayton, yours will be the same as

my mate's, Mr. Truefitt; Mr. Harmon, you will share with my second mate."

"Thank you, sir," said Captain Harper. "It is most kind of you and we all appreciate it."

"We have fought together in other days," said the commodore kindly, "and I could not think of treating an old shipmate unfairly."

"It's more than fair; it's generous, sir," said Mr. Rayton, "and as we are here on your ship, if you think us worthy, we'd be glad to turn to and share the watches with your officers, or in any way we can help out, eh, Harmon?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Speaking with Commodore Harkness' permission," said Mr. Truefitt promptly, "we'd be glad to have you associated with us, gentlemen."

"That's all settled then," said the bluff old commodore heartily. "If the story is a true one, and I am not disposed to doubt it, there ought to be treasure enough aboard the *Marigold* to make us all rich. Those Spanish galleons used to carry stuff in them to run up into the millions, I am told."

"Why, it is not seventy-five years, sir," said Captain Harper, "since Lord Anson came home

from a voyage in these very waters, in which he picked up a Spanish treasure ship that brought him in as much as six millions in gold, I believe."

"If we found half that on the *Marigold*, there would be enough to make us all independently rich forever. Now, gentlemen, here's to a quick run around the Horn, a brisk wind and a clear sea to longitude $167^{\circ} 30'$ west, latitude $4^{\circ} 10'$ south and the treasure island!"

CHAPTER XVI

SIGHTING THE TREASURE ISLAND

FORTUNE, as if to make up for the many rude buffetings to which she had subjected our young heroes hitherto, now heaped up her benefits with a lavish hand.

Favoured by a splendid northeasterly breeze the *Young American* made a magnificent run around the Horn, making the distance to 50° south latitude in the Pacific in the then phenomenal time of eight days. Thereafter, before a splendid wind, she squared away for her long northwesterly cruise to longitude $167^{\circ} 30'$ west and latitude $4^{\circ} 10'$ south.

The long voyage was full of excitement to the youngsters. The Pacific Ocean differed materially from the Atlantic, and when they got among the then little known and almost entirely unexplored islands of the South Seas, every day was replete with the most vivid interest.

The *Young American* was amply provisioned and watered for a much longer cruise than that they had undertaken, and although delightful, tree-covered islands gave them cool, green invitations to stop from time to time, Commodore Harkness steadily held his course. Danger, as a rule, lurked about those charming shores. Indeed, deadly and formidable reefs encircled most of the islets, and troops of fierce and savage cannibals often roved within the forest glades. It is more than likely that the *Young American* passed by many islands which had never been visited by white men, and perhaps never even been seen by them. If he had been an explorer, of course the commodore would have stopped at these islands, but he had other matters more important than mere discovery to engage his attention then.

The *Young American* was a full manned, a well appointed ship. The addition of Mr. Rayton and Mr. Harmon to the corps of officers made duty easier on everybody, and on the whole no happier or more contented crew ever sailed the seas. The commodore and Captain Harper were often in

consultation together. They both lived aft in the former's cabin and had become very friendly indeed. Bob Dashaway was in Mr. Rayton's watch and Jack Barrett in Mr. Truefitt's, but the boys had plenty of time to foregather and exchange boyish confidences or listen to yarns by Dethridge or Buntlin, or the other old shell-backs of the crew, in the long afternoons and in the pleasant hours of recreation in the dog watches, of which they made full use to their great joy and satisfaction.

The only person not completely happy or contented on the ship was Master Joel Clawfinger. He had lain helpless for some time in the sick bay and his disposition had not been much of a problem, but when his broken ribs healed, the officers were in some doubt as to what was best to do with him. Under ordinary circumstances, Commodore Harkness would have had him put in double irons and would have handed him over to the authorities of the first civilised port at which they might touch, to be tried for mutiny on the high seas, which would have been a hanging matter. But the man was so abjectly penitent, he urged

that it was through his influence that the lives of the officers and the boys had been spared by the mutineers on the *Betsey*; he had no hesitation in asserting that Wethers had, in a manner, forced him into the mutiny, and he pleaded—which like almost everything he said, was a lie, safely told, because there was no one to contradict him—that he had done his best for the boys in “The Running Bowline,” back in New York before they had all been kidnapped; in short, they finally left him at large and allowed him to turn to, although they kept him under pretty close watch and his future was undetermined.

One reason they did not iron him and imprison him was because the commodore was so thoroughly confident of the quality of his crew. His men were all down-easters who had been shipped at Salem and other nearby Massachusetts ports. The commodore reasoned rightly enough that there was no mischief that Clawfinger could brew among such men, and he would be less trouble to all hands if he were out than if he were in irons in the brig and had to be waited on and watched. Besides, he was a good seaman, and even in a full manned

ship like the *Young American* good seamen were always in demand.

Clawfinger played his part perfectly. There was not a smarter, a readier and more willing, or a more active man on the ship than he. It appeared presently that he had been an old-time whaler in the South Seas, and having a natural gift of language, he had picked up a fair working knowledge of some of the native dialects, and he might prove useful as an interpreter on occasion.

When they had left the Horn some weeks behind them, the observations taken by the two captains and the two mates—to say nothing of the boys, who delighted in “shooting the sun” with their sextants—indicated that they were approaching the latitude and longitude of the island of their quest. Of course navigation in the days of Francis Drake was not the nice art that it had become at the period of this cruise, but neither captain doubted that the latitude and longitude given would enable them to find the place by a little cruising about. Bright lookouts were kept at the mastheads armed with the most powerful glasses in the ship. The *Young American* was hove to

every night lest she should run by the island in the darkness.

There were no more expert navigators on the seas than the four chief officers on that ship, and their skill and patience at last brought their reward, for about two bells or nine o'clock in the morning of the fiftieth day from the Horn, the lookout sent down from the masthead the ever welcome hail:

“Land ho!”

It was early in the morning and the ship was standing on under easy canvas. As everybody had been in a state of expectation for days, all hands at once came tumbling out on deck at the news.

They had no profile of the island and could not identify it as they ran toward it under a gentle breeze, but its configuration was so peculiar that studying it as they ran around it and comparing it with the map, which the two captains examined from time to time, there was no doubt in anybody's mind that they had at last reached the right spot.

The island was a large one. It appeared to be ten or a dozen miles long and as many broad

in its greatest extremity over all. It belonged to a cluster evidently, for some distance to the southward—they were approaching it on the north side—could be seen other specks of blue that indicated other islands. Whatever the group it was the northernmost of them, for the horizon was absolutely clear in every direction except to the south.

The letter with the map had said that the land was inhabited by a fierce and savage people. At the distance they then were from the island there was, of course, no evidence of humanity visible. Nevertheless, the commodore resolved to neglect no precaution which would insure the safety of the ship and crew. As he drew nearer to the island, he reduced sail and slowly approached the land with the ship under perfect command. There was no telling what hidden reefs, coral or otherwise, might surround the island; indeed, some were plainly shown on the chart.

There were sounding marks at several points on the chart indicating deep water right up to the shores, and the long thumb-like projection, which ran out from the north shore of the island and curved around until it left a very narrow en-

trance between it and the main finger, so to speak, seemed to enclose a good harbour. It was evidently the passage through which the *Marigold* had entered the harbour, for there was no other way of getting to the cave in the rocks, which the plan indicated sheltered her.

Commodore Harkness ran as close to the land as he thought prudent and then hove to the ship. The starboard cutter was then called away and was manned by a heavily armed boat's crew.

Captain Harper was sent in command of it with both boys, who begged earnestly to be allowed to go with him, as his assistants. There was an experienced seaman forward in the bows of the boat with a hand lead to take soundings. The waves were breaking furiously over a reef, which ran along the outer edge of the thumb, but the boat party found deep water in the entrance, perhaps a hundred yards wide between the tip of the thumb and the main land. They rowed across it, sounding carefully, finding no rocks but a good sandy bottom. And the same conditions happily prevailed in the bay.

The Pacific in this latitude was believed to be

treacherous. It would not be safe for the *Young American* to lie to in the offing, especially in these unknown seas. A northerly gale would almost certainly drive her down on the rocks or reefs. Therefore, when the boat party returned to the ship, the wind, blowing fair for the mouth of the harbour, Commodore Harkness determined to take the *Young American* into the land-locked bay. The men of the boat party declared that they had seen no human beings on the shore, although they had not landed, and had therefore made no exploration of the wooded hills which ran down to the narrow beach.

The island seemed to be largely volcanic, the product of some great eruption, some mighty upheaval in bygone times. It rose on the southwest in a huge towering hill perhaps a thousand feet high; straight cliffs fell away from the top to the water's edge at the base of the thumb. The rock was riven and splintered, and jagged islets, huge buttresses, and needles of rock abounded, and the whole was almost completely surrounded by coral reefs. Indeed, the only practicable entrance for a ship was the opening at the end of the thumb.

What was inside that bay—Thumb Bay, they soon called it—would be developed later.

Almost the first question the commodore asked was as to whether the boat party had seen the cave.

“No, sir,” answered Captain Harper, “we did not. In the first place, we did not go far enough into the bay, and in the second place, we were so busy sounding and looking up a suitable anchorage for the ship that we did not have time for anything else.”

“I looked for the cave, sir,” said Bob brightly, “but there were so many rocks and crevices in the cliff that we did not find it.”

“It might be well to make a closer inspection,” said the captain.

“Of course,” returned the commodore, “but time enough for that later on.”

“And, by the way, there is a strange thing about the map,” continued the captain, “it does not agree with the facts. The map shows a much wider entrance than actually appears. It seems to me that the cliff on the edge of the thumb yonder, which rises very high, has been split by some cause, and a large part of it has fallen into the water.”

"Why, that may have been by the earthquake that the letter told about," said Commodore Harkness.

"Aye," returned Captain Harper, "and the wash of the sea has again opened a narrow pass between the thumb and the finger. You know it has had a long time to do its work."

"I see. Well, we'll run in now. Captain Harper, since you have been through the passage, will you go forward and con the ship? I, myself, will take charge aft. We will go in under tops'ls, jibs, spanker, and fore course. Dethridge, send your best hands to the wheel."

"Aye, sir, they'll be Buntlin and Clawfinger. There ain't two men with nicer touch on the spokes in the ship, sir."

"Very good," said the commodore. "Mr. Truefitt!"

"Sir."

"Overhaul your braces, sheets, and halyards. Lead them along and have the men ready to jump at the order."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Mr. Rayton!"

"Sir."

"Overhaul the ground tackle and make ready for dropping the anchor when I give the word."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Silence fore and aft the decks!" cried the commodore, as Captain Harper and the two officers repaired to their several stations.

In perfect silence the fine ship swept down toward the narrow pass, which gave entrance into the harbour. With Captain Harper to direct, with Commodore Harkness to manipulate the sails, with two experts at the wheel, and a willing crew, the somewhat difficult passage was soon made.

The *Young American* presently found herself in a completely land-locked harbour. The enormous ledge of rocks on the thumb, which was entirely bare of vegetation, rose high enough to shut off a view of the sea in that direction.

Bringing the ship with the same nicety that he had exhibited in running the passage to the exact spot that Captain Harper indicated was the best holding ground, Commodore Harkness brought up in seven fathoms of water. There was no wind or sea that could blow or rise in that land-locked basin

which could disturb the ship. One anchor would furnish a sufficiently secure holding, accordingly the *Young American* swung to a long scope by the best bower anchor. Her sails were soon furled and her yards squared in true man-of-war fashion.

By this time it was growing late in the evening. A most careful scrutiny of the shore, which lay perhaps half a mile away, did not reveal any human beings, although Captain Harper and the commodore both thought that they discerned evidences of native huts under the trees back of the sandy beach.

Everything seemed as peaceful as the Garden of Eden. The land was very inviting, and it rose to the eastward by gentle slopes, thickly wooded, to the high cliff at the southern end. The beach shone brilliantly white beneath the declining sun.

It had been many weeks since the men on the ship had had a run on shore, and they looked longingly at the fair prospect. The land was evidently abundantly well watered and fertile, for in places the vegetation was rank. Here and there the hills were cut by streams, whose waters sparkled in the sun as they plunged over the cliffs or meandered

through the sands and into the bay. The south end of the bay was almost closed by a huge cliff behind which they could see nothing, although the map indicated it was there that the ancient ship lay hidden in the cave.

Commodore Harkness would have been glad to allow the men to enjoy a run ashore by watches, but he did not yet dare. Counting the officers, there were about forty persons on the ship, but even with their modern firearms, they would stand a slim chance on shore against the savage denizens of the island, who would surely be present in overwhelming numbers if they were present at all. While they all remained in the ship the commodore could easily make a good defence against attack.

Of course they had not seen any savages yet, but there was something ominous about the stillness of the glades, and as such islands were generally inhabited, and by fierce and savage cannibals, Harkness was forced to deny his men the privilege which he would have granted so gladly and which they would have enjoyed so thoroughly. He and Captain Harper held a long and earnest consulta-

tion, and finally as the result of it, the old boarding nettings of the war time days, which some fancy had caused the commodore to retain aboard were triced up fore and aft. The small guns of the batteries were cast loose and provided, the arms chest opened, and muskets and pistols and cutlasses were served out to the men.

After eight bells the watch on was directed to lie down by the guns, while the watch off was cautioned to be ready for instant service. Either the captain or the commodore was on deck all the time throughout the night, which, however, passed away peaceably and with no disturbances. The ship was not molested, and nothing whatever happened to break the quiet of the tropic calm.

CHAPTER XVII

CHASED BY THE WAR CANOES

As soon as the men had eaten breakfast, the two largest boats in the ship were dropped alongside. One of them Captain Harper and Bob Dashaway took charge of, while the other was under the direction of Mr. Truefitt, with Jack Barrett as his assistant.

Thumb Bay, as they all called it, extended inward and southward for a mile or more until the headland mentioned was reached. Beyond it the bay curved to the eastward and was hidden from the ship. No one could see it, but by the map there lay the cave in which the *Marigold* and the treasure were to be found if they still existed.

"Now, Captain Harper," said the commodore, "I want you to pull up the bay round yonder point and see if you can locate that cave. I want you to keep well away from the shore and keep a bright lookout for savages. If you should find

what you seek, don't be led into any traps. You have more than half the crew of the ship under your command and I trust to your discretion, sir. This is only an inspection, remember."

"You can depend upon me, Commodore," said Captain Harper soberly. "I shall carry out your orders exactly."

"We are in no hurry, you understand; we have all the time there is, and if we locate the *Marigold* we can take our time and consult as to the best way of getting out her treasure, if she has any treasure about her."

"Yes, sir."

"That's all."

"Give way, men!" said Captain Harper, and amid cheers from the rest of the crew on the ship, the seamen bent to their oars and the two boats were rowed swiftly down the bay; Captain Harper with the cutter in the lead.

Commodore Harkness and Mr. Rayton had caused every weapon on the ship to be loaded. The ship happened to lie with her port broadside to the length of the beach; the brass sixes were therefore all shifted to port and were carefully

looked to in case any attack from shore should be made by the savages. There was no attack to be apprehended from the sterile shores and rocky cliffs of the Thumb. In twenty minutes the two boats rounded the point and were lost sight of.

Commodore Harkness and the officers remaining on the ship consulted the map long and earnestly as the morning wore away without any sight of the returning boats.

"It should not be more than a mile to that cave. They ought to be back by this time," said the commodore uneasily at last, "unless——"

"I know Captain Harper, sir," said Mr. Rayton. "There is not a cooler-headed, more careful seaman that lives; he'll obey your orders to the letter, and——"

"I have no doubt of it," assented the commodore. "Still, I think I will send the gig up to see what has become of them. Mr. Rayton, will you take charge?"

"Certainly, sir, gladly."

"Dethridge, call away the gig," said the commodore, "and, Mr. Rayton, don't go any further from the ship than the point yonder. Just far

enough to look down the inner harbour or bay, and——”

“Boats are coming back, sir,” sang out a man forward.

The commodore and Mr. Rayton ran across the deck and peered up the bay. Sure enough the two boats were rounding the point.

“Keep fast the gig,” said the commodore, staring hard at the cutters.

“They’re coming fast, sir,” said Mr. Rayton. “See how the water whitens about their prows.”

“Aye,” returned the commodore, leaning over the side and staring ahead. “They could not be working harder if they were rowing a race.” He walked rapidly to the forecastle. “One or two of you jump aloft, perhaps you can see what’s the matter,” he continued.

Two or three men sprang into the fore shrouds and scrambled up to the crosstrees with cat-like agility. They had scarcely settled themselves when they hailed the deck.

“There’s three big boats full of savages chasin’ the cutters, sir,” was the news imparted.

Indeed, they had scarcely given the information

when the first of the war canoes rounded the point. None of the men on board the *Young American* had ever seen a boat of that kind. She had a high prow and stern, and was manned by perhaps sixty oarsmen, and carried a number of other men brandishing broad-bladed spears and yelling furiously. Only the fact that she was so heavily overloaded kept her from overhauling the cutters. She was followed by two other similar, though slightly smaller war canoes.

The commodore and Mr. Rayton looked on at the race for life or death in a great anxiety into which the other officers and the men on board fully entered.

"I think they can do it, sir," said Mr. Rayton at last. "They're still some distance ahead."

"Aye, but if those devils get to throwing their spears."

"They're not near enough for that yet, I take it."

"No, thank God," said the commodore.

"Dethridge!"

"Sir."

"Give 'em a shot from that for'ard six-pounder. It might startle them."

"Shall I shoot to kill, sir?"

"Don't shoot until you must, but when you do always shoot to kill," said the commodore, grimly enunciating a safe rule.

Old Dethridge, assembling two or three men about the breech of the gun, trained it carefully on the approaching war canoe, the ship having swung sufficiently for it to bear. It was a nice shot. He had to give the piece sufficient elevation to be sure to carry over the two boats with which the canoes, all of them now in plain sight, were in direct line. When he was ready he pulled the lock spring. There was a tremendous roar accentuated by the cliffs of the bay, and the six-pound shot went hurtling toward the enemy.

In his anxiety to spare his own boats, Dethridge had given the piece a little too much elevation. Yet it was a beautiful line shot; it cleared the heads of the men in the first canoe and struck one of the oars on the port side of the second canoe which, of course, broke short off, as it plunged into the sea. It was not so much the shot as it

was the smoke and the noise of the report which was efficacious, for with wild outbursts of yells of terror, the men in the canoes stopped rowing, seeing which the men in the cutters redoubled their efforts.

There was really little need for further effort, for before Commodore Harkness could get ready to give the savages another shot the crews of the canoes bent to their paddles again, the boats of the savages turned about, and rapidly made their way up the bay, rounding the point and disappearing as quickly as they had come.

As they turned broadside to the ship there was an excellent chance to sink them. Old Bill Dethridge, indeed, ventured to ask permission.

"May I give 'em the rest of the battery, sir?" he asked respectfully enough. "I won't miss 'em this time," he added.

Commodore Harkness considered the matter a moment and finally decided not to allow it.

"No," he said, "we have frightened them off, perhaps we can gain their friendship, and that will be better than fighting them. Secure the guns."

By this time the boats were alongside.

Mr. Harper scrambled up the battens, followed by Bob Dashaway; Mr. Truefitt and Jack Barrett coming a moment or two later.

"Well, sir," said the commodore.

"That was a touch and go with us, sir," said Captain Harper. "Your shot saved us, my men were pretty well spent."

"I am glad you got away safely," said the commodore. "How was it, sir?"

"According to orders," returned Captain Harper, while the men hooked on the falls and the crew ran the boats up to the davits, "we kept carefully away from the shore. We rounded the point, rowed down about half a mile until we saw the open mouth of the cave, which is scarcely more than a huge niche or crevice in the rocks, but well sheltered from any wind likely to blow or any seas."

"Was there anything in the cave?"

The crew were crowded in the gangways just forward of the mainmast. The officers were clustered on the quarter-deck, and everybody was listening eagerly. Commodore Harkness raised his

voice and Captain Harper gave his answer in the same tone in order that everybody might hear.

"Yes, there was."

"What was it?"

"An old-fashioned ship, sir."

"Afloat?"

"No, sir, lying on her beam ends on the sand well above the highest tide. She had been driven in there somehow. Her masts were gone. So far as we could see from seaward, she was very old and in a most dilapidated condition."

"And did you find out her name?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was it?"

"It was in faded gilt letters across her stern." Captain Harper paused a moment and surveyed the crew.

"Well, sir?" said the commodore impatiently.

"*The Marigold of Portsmouth!*"

At this the men broke into ringing cheers.

"What next, sir?"

"We rowed closer intending to land when suddenly the cliffs above were black with natives. They yelled and gesticulated, but I thought I

would venture on a nearer look as I could not see how they could get down to us, consequently we pulled slowly in toward the beach before the mouth of the cave. Suddenly from the mouth of an estuary which seemed to run inland through a broad rift in the cliff, a deep ravine to the right of where we lay and about a mile distant which looked as if it might be the mouth of a river, we saw the prow of a big canoe; it came toward us followed by two others. We put about and pulled for our lives and the rest you know about, sir."

"You have done well," said the commodore. "Men," he added, turning to the crew, "I make no doubt the treasure is there, and have it we will, all the savages in the Pacific to the contrary notwithstanding."

And again the old ship resounded with a great outburst of cheering, in the midst of which Mr. Harmon, who had the watch, touched Commodore Harkness on the shoulder.

"There are some natives yonder on the beach waving palm branches. They evidently want to parley, sir," he said.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BATTLE IN THUMB BAY

IT was even as Mr. Harmon had said. A growing number of natives were assembling on the beach at the water's edge, waving palm branches, stretching out their hands toward the ship, and calling out something in a strange tongue not understandable. Those nearest the ship had already laid aside their weapons, and their peaceful intent was scarcely to be misunderstood.

"Captain Harper," said the commodore, "I shall have to call upon you again. Take a boat and row over toward the shore, keeping well away from the beach, however, and on no account making a landing, and see what you can make of them."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Harper. "Of course I do not know their speech, and——"

"But did not the man, Clawfinger, say he had some knowledge of these South Sea Island dialects?"

"Yes, sir, he did."

"Very good. Clawfinger!"

"Here, sir," answered the man from the crowd of seamen who were staring landward.

"Go with Mr. Harper and see if you can make out what they want."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"And hark ye, man! You are not in good odour on the ship; if you serve us well in this, perhaps I shall be inclined to deal mercifully with you later on."

"I'll do my best, sir."

The boat was soon manned again, and a short, steady pull brought it within hailing distance of the shore.

The men on the beach made a great jabbering outcry, out of which Captain Harper could, of course, make nothing. Finally he got some degree of silence by standing up and waving his hand, and then he nodded to Clawfinger.

The seaman unshipped his oar, stood up in the boat, and said one or two words in a tongue not unlike that used by the islanders.

The words were greeted with a loud shout, and

then one of the oldest among them, who seemed to be a chief, stood out from the throng. Raising the spear which he had not discarded, he shook it violently in the direction of the boat, and pointing to seaward uttered slowly a dozen words as he did so.

Clawfinger again replied, and a conversation took place between the boat and the shore. It was terminated by an unusual incident. As he spoke his last word, the seaman raised his maimed hand and shook it in the face of the man on shore.

The sight of it produced a miraculous effect. With cries of terror and alarm the savages turned and fled tumultuously, crashing through the jungle and disappearing by narrow trails under the trees until there was not one left on the beach!

"Well," said Captain Harper, who had watched the whole scene attentively, "what about it? Can you understand?"

"Pretty well, sir," answered Clawfinger.

"What do they want?"

"They say that the ship in the cave yonder is their god, an' we must keep away from it an' let it alone or they'll kill us an' eat us, too. They

say we'd better go away, they don't want us here anyway. They don't like our looks, they are warning us against landing, although they'll let us get wood and water if we must have it. I can't make out all of it, but that's about what they mean."

"And why did they run at the last minute?"

"I guess it's this hand of mine that frightened them," said the man grimly. "It's enough to frighten anybody, but they think because I am different from the rest of ye that maybe I'm a god too; leastwise, I figure it out that way."

"We will go back to the ship and report," said Captain Harper. "Give way, men."

A few words put the commodore in possession of the facts. He closely questioned Clawfinger, but could get nothing more out of him; neither he nor any one aboard had any disposition to doubt that the man was telling the truth, so far as he chose at least; it was all natural and understandable, and the opposition of the islanders presented a most serious difficulty.

Wood and water were not what they wanted, and the very thing that was desired seemed to be

the very thing that could not be had. The commodore and all on board were more determined than ever to visit the *Marigold* and if she still contained the treasure, to fetch it away, but it was evident that this could not be done without a battle. Whether the ship and her guns and their small arms would be enough to counterbalance the disparity in numbers was a question. The savages were evidently fierce, bold, and warlike and very determined.

It was after dinner when all these goings on were over, and Commodore Harkness decided that nothing further could be done that day. He and the officers spent the larger part of the afternoon in the cabin discussing various plans and methods of action. They questioned Clawfinger again, finally suspecting that the man was keeping back something, but they had no assurance as to that, and were forced finally to dismiss him. A few natives were seen from time to time on the shore, but no further communication passed between the ship and the island.

At the appointed hour hammocks were piped down and the watch off was sent below to sleep.

Instead of the anchor watch usual in port, the commodore kept one full watch on deck.

About ten o'clock he and Captain Harper concluded that they would like to have further conversation with Clawfinger. They had determined upon a plan, and as he was the only means of communication with the islanders, he was a very important factor in carrying it out.

Now Clawfinger happened to be a member of the watch on deck. The officer of the watch, Mr. Truefitt, was asked to rout him out from the men sleeping under the boom boats, or by the guns, and send him aft.

In five minutes Mr. Truefitt himself entered the cabin with a statement that Clawfinger was not to be found. The man's record was so bad that the commodore took the unusual step of ordering all hands to be called on deck, quietly of course, and without giving any alarm.

"This needs to be looked into," he said to Captain Harper. "Of course, the man may be sulking below."

"Not he," said the captain. "I have an idea that we will find that he has gone ashore."

“And to what end?”

“To stir up those natives against us. You see how they were impressed by the sight of his hand; they think he is some kind of a god by his own showing. He can speak their language; perhaps he can persuade them to some devilment. He’s afraid of nothing. Possibly he hopes to seize the ship, load her with the treasure, and sail away in some fashion with such savage assistance as he can get. The man’s bold enough and wicked enough to stop at nothing. Come, let us go out on deck.”

The two gentlemen left the cabin and Mr. Truefitt reported.

“Sir, the crew has been mustered, and Clawfinger does not appear to be aboard.”

“What did I tell you?” said the captain.

“Shall I let the starboard watch go below and turn in again, sir?” asked Mr. Truefitt.

“No,” answered the commodore, “keep them on deck. Now that we have got them here let them lie down beside the guns if they want to. First, let every man get his arms.”

“I suppose,” said Captain Harper, “that Claw-

finger slipped overboard and swam ashore. It is as dark as pitch and he could easily have got away unseen. I have heard the men say that he was a fine swimmer!"

"That must be the way of it," said the commodore. "Gentlemen," he turned to the little group of officers, "we have been too easy with that villain. It wouldn't surprise me if he brought the whole island down on us. I don't think it would be well for any of us to turn in to-night. And, Mr. Truefitt!"

"Yes, sir."

"Suppose you get out another anchor, drop a stream anchor overboard, passing the cable out through the stern cabin window, and do it quietly."

The ship was swinging with her port broadside toward the beach. Commodore Harkness, therefore, suggested that the starboard stream anchor be used. He did not explain why he did this, but his orders were carried out, and the starboard battery was shifted back in place also. Thereafter silence supervened, most of the seamen going to sleep on the deck.

Captain Harper and the commodore repaired



The seaman stood up in the boat, and said one or two
words in a tongue not unlike that used
by the islanders (page 256)

to the poop deck and talked together in low whispers. The other officers, except those specifically on watch, lay down on the decks like the men to get some rest. There was no sleep for Bob and Jack, however; they were too excited over the events of the day and the possibilities of the night to be able to close an eyelid.

At seven bells or about half-past eleven o'clock, an alarm was given by a man on watch forward. He passed the word to a shipmate, who came running aft and reported that he thought he saw boats approaching in the darkness. There was some current in the bay, evidently produced by the outflow of rivers, not perceptible when the tide was coming in, but quite so during the ebb, as now.

"They don't seem to be rowing, sir," said the man reporting to Mr. Truefitt. "They're slowly driftin' down on us."

Commodore Harkness had heard the men running aft, and he and Captain Harper leaned over the poop rail, directly above Mr. Truefitt's head, and listened. He knew all that had been said, therefore, as soon as the man had said it.

"I suspected as much," said the commodore. "Pass the word quietly among the men to get up and man both broadsides. Take ten men yourself, Mr. Truefitt, and go to the forecastle. Give Mr. Rayton five men for the poop deck here, the rest distribute in the waist to man the batteries. Captain Harper, will you take charge of the guns? Do all silently, gentlemen; they think to surprise us but we will show them. Are those lights ready?"

"All ready, sir," said Mr. Truefitt.

"If the boats should get alongside, set fire to the tar barrels and heave them overboard. Let no one discharge a weapon until I give the word. Mr. Dashaway!"

"Here, sir," replied Bob.

"You and Mr. Barrett will be my personal aids during the action, if we have one. Come up here on the poop deck."

The two boys scampered up the ladder and saluted the commodore. The ship was a-bustle now with men hurrying to their several stations. They went without noise and confusion like the well trained seamen they were.

By this time the approaching boats could be made out dimly. They were slowly drifting down with the tide and current. In the darkness they seemed to the commodore to be huge war canoes like those which had pursued the cutters in the morning.

"Boys," said the old man, "this is like old times, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"You remember the day we fought off the *Endymion's* boats without any more men than we have aboard now?" *

"Indeed we do, sir," answered Bob.

"If we could beat off white men, we can make short work of these savages," said Jack.

"I am not so sure about that," said the commodore. "At any rate, it will be no easy job. "Ah!" he exclaimed. "What was that?"

There was a splash in the water. The savages broke out their paddles evidently, and were coming to attack the ship on both sides.

"Mr. Dashaway, my compliments to Captain Harper, tell him to open fire with his starboard

* See *Bob Dashaway, Privateersman*, for this heroic defence.

and port guns as the canoes get in range, without further orders and at his discretion."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Bob, scampering forward.

"Mr. Barrett, tell Mr. Truefitt on the forecastle to hold his fire until he is actually boarded. In general, pass the word for the men to keep fast their small arms until the savages are swinging at the nettings if they get that far. Every shot must tell."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Jack, turning and jumping down the ladder and disappearing in the darkness.

The canoers had all turned to their paddles as could be seen by the splashing and whitening of the water in the darkness. As the savages used no rowlocks, they made no sound or but little.

There was a gentle offshore breeze blowing which helped the boats, and with the paddle, current, tide, and wind they came on swiftly.

Commodore Harkness leaned over the rail staring ahead.

"Why doesn't Captain Harper begin?" he thought anxiously.

But Captain Harper was waiting until the op-

portune moment. There seemed to be six or seven of these big canoes, and as each one contained from sixty to a hundred men, the number of assailants was upwards of five hundred.

Captain Harper, who was a very cool and deliberate man, waited until the first two boats on either side were opposite the bows of the ship, and then he suddenly shouted in a tremendous voice:

“Fire!”

The eight six-pounders, four on each side, shattered the silence of the night by the roar of their discharge. The sound of the cannon was instantly lost in an outburst of hideous, fierce, blood-curdling yells from the savages, intermingled with the groans and shrieks and the crushing sound of splintered wood. At this juncture Mr. Truefitt threw overboard two lighted tar barrels, one on either side, which burned brightly, making everything on the water plainly visible from the decks.

The broadsides on either hand had been well aimed and had carried death and destruction to numbers of men in the closely packed canoes. One canoe had been fairly cut in two and drifted away out of the battle. The others had been badly

smashed, but there remained three or four canoes which had not received any fire at all.

The courage of the savages was of the highest order, for apparently undaunted or undismayed by the frightful welcome they had received, all of the canoes dashed at the ship pell-mell. There was no time to load the broadside guns again before the big war boats of the savages smashed against the side of the *Young American*. In an instant the rail was black with heads. The islanders clung like monkeys to the boarding nettings with one hand while they thrust at the crew with their long spears with the other.

"Now is your time, men," cried Commodore Harkness, "give it to them!"

There were three or four pistols all charged and ready for every man, and the ship was soon surrounded by a ring of crackling fire. The courage of the savages was high, but they were not used to firearms, the discharge of the morning was the first that they had heard, and when the leaden bullets ripped and tore through the wall of men, sometimes two or three deep about the ship, it was more than savage flesh and blood could stand.

They dropped back into their boats in wild confusion.

"Well done, lads," cried the commodore, "pour it into them while they are breaking away! Give 'em a dose that will teach 'em a lesson, Captain Harper."

"The ship's under way, sir!" suddenly roared Mr. Truefitt from the forecandle, and indeed all on board were conscious that the *Young American* was swinging seaward and toward the rocky shore of the thumb under a wind and tide and current. "Somebody has cut our cable," continued the mate in great alarm.

Commodore Harkness realised what had happened. Some one, thinking the ship still swung to the single cable, had cut it, hoping to see her drift upon the shore, in which case she would be wrecked and then be an easy prey. It was just because he had foreseen the possibility of such an attempt that the commodore had anchored astern with a stream cable. The movement of the ship, however, had an unusual effect on the attackers, for as she swung with the current she dragged clear of the canoes to starboard, which immediately pulled away in

the darkness, while she ground down upon the canoes to port, huddling them together in a helpless mass. Commodore Harkness saw what was happening. He roared out:

"Starboard watch, lay aft here and clap a tackle into the stream cable and heave it short! Port watch, attend to those villains in the boat. Mr. Rayton!"

"Sir?"

"Take charge of the starboard watch and get that stream cable short. Lively!"

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Rayton, rushing into the captain's cabin with the watch, some of them carrying a heavy watch tackle. Meanwhile the port watch clambered up on the rail and emptied their remaining pistols and muskets into the huddle of men, grinding together in the canoes under the ship's counter.

There was a brief, fierce moment or two of swaying, desperate fighting until the ship brought up against the stream cable, which Mr. Rayton had by this time got hove short. The canoes finally worked clear and disappeared. Neither the commodore nor the captain having the least fear

of a renewal of hostilities on the part of the savages, a survey of the ship was made for accidents and casualties.

Three men of the crew had been killed, every one of them by a spear thrust. The spear was still sticking through the heart of one of the men lying on the deck. Four more had been wounded, two having received especially nasty cuts, which, however, did not promise to end seriously.

The boarding nettings had been cut and severed here and there by the sharp spears, but no other damage had been sustained.

The cut cable had been taken aboard, and the severed end was examined by the two captains. It had been cut clear through by a sharp knife, and as it was probable that none of the savages possessed such a knife, evidently that was Claw-finger's work, as the clever idea was undoubtedly his.

"Did any one see him in the action?" asked the commodore.

No one had.

"He is responsible for it all," said Captain Harper.

"Of course," answered Commodore Harkness grimly. "Well, we'll deal with him when we get him. Meanwhile, what time is it?" He pulled out his watch. "Captain Harper," he exclaimed, "would you believe it, the whole affair has taken just about twenty minutes. Let the watch off go below and turn in. Who has the deck?"

"I have, sir," said Mr. Rayton.

"I don't apprehend any further attack to-night, but see that you have a line of lookouts posted and have them keep their weather eyes lifting for anything from the shore. I guess there'll be no more trouble until morning. Captain Harper, if you are not too sleepy, we can discuss our programme for the morrow in the cabin."

CHAPTER XIX

PLANNING THE ATTACK

THE rest of the night passed away uneventfully. During the most of the next day heavily armed boat parties were sent out to take soundings of Thumb Bay. One of the six-pounders was mounted in the bow of the launch, the largest of the small boats, and she was sent ahead to cover the other boats and prevent a possible attack by the war canoes. But the savages seemed to have had enough of it the night before, and the boats were not molested.

The launch was in charge of Dashaway and Barrett, with old Dethridge and Jack Buntlin to assist them, while the officers did the sounding work with the other boats—just what it was all for, nobody quite knew. The boys were spoiling for a fight, but no opportunity was afforded them. Except for a stray native here and there under the trees, they saw no one. Late in the afternoon

a number of the savages assembled on the beach, but some sharp musket practice by the two captains and the lads dispersed them with considerable loss. As the commodore said:

“It is just as well every time we get a chance to take it now and show them what we can do and how we can do it.”

“Yes,” said Captain Harper, “before we get through they will have a wholesome respect for our firearms.”

“I am sorry that they did not meet us peaceably, though,” said the commodore. “I have been a fighter more or less all of my life, but I confess I don’t fancy it.”

“Nor I,” said Captain Harper, “but what could we do, they were the aggressors at first, and——”

“Oh, we’ll have to carry it through now,” answered the commodore.

By nightfall all hands were thoroughly tired out. Everybody had taken a turn in the boats and the officers and men were glad enough when the recall was hoisted and they came back to the ship.

Not a thing had been seen of Clawfinger during

the day, and the officers scarcely fancied that there was danger of another attack that night; nevertheless, no precautions were neglected. The watches were set with unusual care and everything was made ready. The dead men had been buried late in the afternoon and all the wounded were doing well. The *Young American*, of course, carried no surgeon, being a merchant ship, but both captains had a fair knowledge of medicine and surgery, and attended to the sufferers under the circumstances without much difficulty.

At eight bells the officers were called to a conference in the commodore's cabin. To this conference, to their great delight, Bob and Jack were bidden. There the plans for the next day were outlined to all of them and they were sent back to their watches, their hammocks, or their berths.

Just as soon as the first flush of dawn lightened the east, the launch was hoisted out, and the largest kedge anchor was put aboard her. This anchor was carried up the bay at the end of a long scope of cable and dropped overboard. The ship was then kedged or hauled up to the anchor. The process was repeated again and again until pres-

ently after an hour of hard labour she was dragged around the point and in a short time afterward she came to anchor abreast the cave and within easy cannon shot distance of the beach.

The movements of the ship had, of course, been noted from the shore, and although but few natives were visible in the thick undergrowth, it was quite evident that they were assembled in great masses in the shelter of the trees.

Now the cave was right in the middle of a wall of rock several hundred feet high. On the left there was no approach. On the right of the entrance as they looked at it, a gentle beach ran along the foot of the cliff opening at a half mile away into a sort of a cleft with gently ascending sides thickly wooded, through which a brook or river flowed into the bay. As Captain Harper had told them, from the foot of the cliff to the left of the opening into the cave, rose a jagged, splintered needle or column of rock. It seemed almost as if it had been cut away by a gigantic axe from the main cliff. The top was just on a level with the cliff. The water side of this pinnacle was very broken; it was in plain view from the ship,

and the commodore studied it carefully with his glasses.

"I think there is no doubt but what they can do it," he said to Captain Harper.

"I am sure of it."

"Mr. Barrett!"

"Sir?"

"There is your needle of rock! Take six men and the dinghy, get ready to row ashore there, get to the top of it and carry out the orders we gave you last night. Remember, you are not to fire until it is necessary. Don't go shooting away your ammunition at nothing at all. Don't fire until it counts. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will have some trouble getting to the top of that needle, but I think you can do it if you are careful."

"We'll do it, sir," said Barrett confidently, turning away, and with the six men who had been previously detailed, entering the dinghy, which had been lowered on the starboard side of the ship where it would not be seen from the shore.

"I think you had better wait," said the commo-

dore, stepping to the side and looking over as the man broke out the oars, "until we open fire. We want this to be a kind of a surprise. You have all your weapons with you?"

"Yes, sir," said Barrett, "every man has two pistols and a musket."

"And you have plenty of ammunition?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Just as soon as the battle begins, I will leave you free to act in accordance with your discretion. Take one of my own private rifles with you and save it for a long shot."

As the commodore spoke he handed the boy a new and especially powerful and long range rifle. Jack saluted and the boat swung to its painter. Every man was ready and anxious to go. His detachment had been selected from among the most active, daring, cool-headed light yardmen in the ship.

"Now, Captain Harper," added the commodore, "you are to take charge of the batteries with both the second mates to assist you. Mr. Truefitt and Mr. Rayton will load all but six men into the launch. These six men with you and

the two officers will have to attend to the discharge of the great guns. Every shot must be made to tell."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Captain Harper and the various other officers.

There was a little bustle for a few moments as the launch was filled with men while those designated to remain aboard took their places at the guns of the battery, which had all been shifted to starboard again, one being mounted temporarily on the topgallant forecastle.

They were trained to cover the beach down which of necessity any force of natives must come. It was still very early in the morning. The sunlight was behind the cave, the interior of it was quite dark. By the aid of the glass the commodore could distinguish the dim outlines of an old-fashioned ship, dismasted and lying over on her beam ends. Everything else but that was indistinct to the last degree, although every eye on the ship through every convenient port searched the black cavern with eager curiosity.

When all was ready the commodore stepped over to the starboard side where the boats lay. He had

been in action many times; fighting was more or less a matter of course to him, yet he was reluctant to give the word in this instance, for he could not tell exactly how things might turn out.

He turned forward, then swept the bay with his glass. At the extreme upper end he saw several of the war canoes drawn up on the beach; some of them appeared to be badly shattered. There was no evidence of life about them, however. He guessed, and guessed rightly, that having had one try at him by that means, the savages would resort to other methods to stop him. He had a somewhat healthy respect for the military genius of Clawfinger, who had shown himself a remarkable man, and he wondered just what the sailor would do, but there was no help for it, the word had to be given.

"Give away, Mr. Truefitt," he said, "and pull very slowly, just as slowly as you can, around the bow of the ship and toward the shore. I think your appearance will call the savages down to the strand, where we can open on them with our guns. Your men are all armed, but you are not to discharge a weapon until it is absolutely necessary;

after we have checked the rush that will probably come down the sands, you are to dash for the cave. Mr. Barrett and his men will cover you. Once you get inside I think you will be safe."

"And if we should find the cave occupied, sir?" asked Mr. Truefitt.

"In that case," answered the commodore, "you will have to clear it out the best way you can. You have a score of good lads with you, plenty of ammunition, pikes, and cutlasses to spare. Has every man of yours got a steel boarding cap on?"

"Yes, sir, every one."

"Well then, go, and God bless you. Reserve your fire, but when the time does come, give it to them. Mr. Rayton, should anything happen to Mr. Truefitt you will be in command."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Mr. Dashaway, you have a potent piece in that boat gun. Don't get nervous and fire it off until you get the order."

"No, sir," said Bob eagerly.

He was stationed in the bow of the launch, with Jack Buntlin, in charge of the boat gun, a small brass cannonade.

"Mr. Barrett!" said the commodore.

"Yes, sir."

"You are not to move until the first broadside gun is fired. What wind there is is going down the bay, and the smoke will cover you; besides they'll be so excited they won't be apt to notice you, and your men are to row their best to get under the lee of that pinnacle in short order."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The commodore looked long at the boys and men. Somehow he had never been so reluctant to give the word to begin an action.

"If any of you get a chance at that arch fiend, Clawfinger," he said at last, "don't lose it."

"No, sir!" burst from every throat on the other side of the ship.

The commodore smiled. The men were in good temper.

"Give away, Mr. Truefitt," he said at last.

The next instant the heavy launch drew ahead of the bow of the ship, which brought it in plain view from the shore, toward which it was very slowly rowed. As if in response to a magic signal

the cleft to the far right was immediately filled with masses of men. The island was evidently exceedingly populous and there may have been a thousand warriors armed with clubs, spears, and shields.

As the launch slowly moved toward the cave, a mass of men in the ravine came out on the beach.

“By Heavens,” exclaimed the commodore, “there must be a thousand of them!”

He noticed they formed up in some kind of rude order and observed them running along the strand toward the cave.

“Look yonder, sir!” cried Mr. Harmon, who was standing nearest him at the first gun.

He pointed upward, and the top of the cliff was seen to be lined with men. The tactics of the savages were simple indeed, and yet they were quite adequate and moreover the best that could be devised. The men on top of the cliff were to hurl a rain of spears down on the boat's crew as soon as they landed, while the men on the beach would rush them and endeavour to capture them. There were a number of men in the masses, who by their size and bearing seemed to be chiefs, but nowhere

was Clawfinger to be seen, although it was obviously his mind which had arranged the plan of operations.

"Captain Harper," said the commodore, "give them a shot from that bow gun on the fo'c's'l. Depress it so that the shot strikes water first, I don't want to discourage them too much at the first flush," continued the old man grimly, "I want to get them in closer range."

The thought of those poor dead and wounded seamen of his rankled in the old man's mind evidently.

"Aye, aye, sir," said Captain Harper, elevating the breach of the forward gun and pulling the lock spring.

There was a deep roar in the narrow bay and the battle was on. Designedly the shot struck the water of the bay near the shore, splashing a few of the savages but with no other effect. It was greeted with derisive shouts and yells by the islanders. They had got somewhat used to noise by this time.

The instant the report was heard, Jack Barrett's men got under way. The little dinghy fairly

leaped through the water as she darted around the stern of the ship and made her way to the pinnacle of rock. So far as those on the ship could tell, no one from the shore noticed her or paid any particular attention to her. At any rate in an incredibly short time the boat passed over the open water and reached the islet.

Carefully securing the boat, Barrett and his sailors sprang out and began the ascent of the cliffs. It was a very difficult and a very dangerous task. If they had stopped to think about it they might have flinched from it, but they went at it with vigour and determination, encouraged by the cheers of the men on the ship and stimulated by the yells of the savages, for at that instant, as the launch was approaching nearer and nearer the mouth of the cave, the islanders broke into a mad run and came streaming down the beach toward the entrance, apparently resolved to meet the launch on her landing.

“Now, Captain Harper!” cried the commodore. “Give it to them one by one!”

The guns had been loaded with langridge, canvas bags of small missiles of every sort, which tore

open on striking and scattered death and destruction in every direction.

The running mass of savages was an easy target. The first discharge, carefully aimed, tore up the whole front rank; the momentum of the mass, however, was so great, and there were so many of them, that they came rolling down the beach quite unchecked. Gun after gun sent its message of death into them. The advance became slower; finally it stopped.

One man, evidently a chief, leaped out in front of the men, shook his spear, and shouted something. Taking new heart, the survivors, who still numbered hundreds, again came on.

Commodore Harkness, who was a wonderful shot with a rifle, drew a fine bead upon him with his own favourite weapon and pulled the trigger. In the very act of charging the man leaped into the air and fell dead with the bullet in his heart. The savages stopped at this, and an opportune discharge of two of the forward guns, which had been hastily reloaded, took the heart out of them for the time being.

They ran in sudden panic back up the beach and

disappeared in the ravine. Not all of them, however, for the white sand was spotted with dead and dying men. It was a hideous sight to see some of them writhing in their agonies.

CHAPTER XX

THE FIGHT ON THE BEACH

"Now is your time, Mr. Truefitt!" bellowed the commodore through his speaking trumpet.

"Lively, make a dash for it!"

Mr. Truefitt waved his hand.

"Give way hard!" he cried.

The boat, which had been scarcely drifting, suddenly shot forward under the momentum given by her strong-armed oarsmen. Their position was still one of extreme danger, however, for the top of the cliff was lined with men. The range was too great for the ordinary small arms on the *Young American*, and it was impossible to elevate the broadside guns sufficiently for their shot to rake the top of the cliff which towered far above them.

Mr. Truefitt had instant warning of what he might expect, for as the boat swept toward the beach, the air was filled with a shower of spears, hurled with tremendous force and skill by the men

on the brink of the cliff above the cave. In their excitement, however, the savages had discharged their first volley too soon, for only one spear reached the boat. This buried itself in the forward thwart, which was next Bob Dashaway's back and between the two bow oarsmen.

The commodore and the men on the ship cast anxious glances from the launch to the pinnacle. A few more feet and the launch would be within easy range of the spearmen. Would Barrett and his men gain the top in time? At that very instant, the crack of a small firearm resounded above their heads and a faint puff of blue smoke arose from the top of the pinnacle.

"Good!" exclaimed the commodore. "The boy's on top!"

The next instant the air was filled with the sound of a volley. The eager watchers on the top saw four of the savages standing on the very brink of the cliff pitch forward and come crashing down upon the beach below. A scattering and ineffective discharge of spears from the top met the launch, but the savages were so surprised and alarmed by the spitting fire which came rattling and crashing

from the top of the pinnacle, not twenty feet away from them, that the spears did no damage, although several grazed one or two of the men in the boat.

They were brave, these islanders, for while some of them strove to throw spears at the cutter, others sought to get sight of the men on the needle in the hope of spearing them. But the top of the needle was very ragged, there was plenty of cover, and Jack Barrett had disposed of his men very cunningly. Some of them were old men-o'-war's men familiar with weapons. They loaded and fired with remarkable speed. The game was too unequal. The broad-bladed spear was no match for a heavy ship's pistol or a heavier musket at that distance. The discharge soon cleared the top of the cliff, for every native who would walk fled incontinently at last. There was no further danger to be apprehended from them.

The boy and the party had done their important work perfectly. The next instant the keel of the launch grated on the beach. The men in her cheered like mad, they thought that their task was over; the hardest part was still to come, although they did not then know it. The oars were shipped

inboard and the men rose to their feet ready to debark, when the sharp eye of Bob Dashaway caught sight of a moving figure.

"There's somebody in the cave, sir!" he cried.

The next instant the whole place was black with men. There must have been seventy-five of them, and they seemed like two hundred as they came running out from the shelter of the ancient ship and from recesses and niches of the crevices of the cave. They were swift-footed and alert beyond expression. Somebody commanded them who knew how to manœuvre them, for before the men in the boat realised their position, they had formed and poured in a terrific rain of spears, which they followed by a great rush on the cutter.

The first spear struck Mr. Truefitt, who had gone forward, fair in the throat, and almost cut off his head. Another spear pierced one of the seamen through the back; several others were wounded. It was the quickness of Bob Dashaway that saved the day. Mr. Truefitt, dead before he could open his mouth, could give no order; indeed, there was no time. The launch lay so

that its bow pointed directly at the rushing mass. Without a second's hesitation, Bob pulled the lock string of the boat cannonade. There was a flash of fire, a burst of smoke, and a deafening roar, the noise of the discharge being thrown back by the walls of the cave.

The shot did frightful execution; perhaps a score of the savages were killed or so seriously wounded as to be helpless, and many others were slightly wounded. The rush was stopped for a moment, and that moment gave the Americans the time they needed.

Mr. Rayton, seeing that poor Mr. Truefitt was stone dead, at once assumed the command.

"Rush them!" he cried in his great voice. "Lively! Your pistols first and then give 'em your cutlasses! Bear a hand, for God's sake!"

The men needed no urging. The peril in which they stood was so tremendous that they realised their lives depended on their efforts. They were not fighting for treasure now, but something far more dear. They leaped out of the boat, up the strand, all except one or two who were wounded, and fired their pistols at the savages as they did so.

In their excitement, however, their aim was not particularly good.

The savages also recovered from the first shock, and a white figure, half naked, suddenly appeared on the wreck of the *Marigold*, a voice that Bob Dashaway knew shouted words they could not recognise in a strange tongue, and a hand whose claw-like fingers, some of them could mark even in their excitement, hurled a spear with unerring aim at the nearest seaman. It struck him full in the breast, and he went down like a felled ox.

The next instant, with a roar of rage and a yell of hatred, the two bodies met. The spears were more or less useless in such a close joined mêlée as that in the cave. The cutlass was a far handier and a far deadlier weapon, and every man had an undischarged pistol still, with which he could give good account of himself. The odds were heavy against the white men, however, about fifty to fifteen. Then ensued such a battle in the cave as Homer would have loved to tell about. Hacking, cutting, thrusting on the part of the white men; clubbing, stabbing, wrestling on the part of the

brown. Cheers, savage yells, groans, cries of terror, the crack of pistols filled the place with a horrid sound.

On the brink of the needle, Barrett and his men could look down into the cave. They dared not leave their places, because if they did, the savages would man the cliff once more and no one would ever leave the cave alive. On the ship the handful of men there stared at the struggle going on, which they could see but which they were powerless to help. They could not leave the ship and her guns, for if they did so, the savages would mass on the beach. They were already reassembling in the cleft and an occasional cannon shot was required to keep them back.

The spectators were like people observing a play in a theatre, only no play was ever like this since the days of the Roman gladiators. The old commodore wrung his hands in anguish.

"My God!" he said to Captain Harper, who stood by him white-faced. "I wish we had never heard of this cursed treasure. I would give it all for the lives of those men. Do you think they'll be able to master them?"

"I don't know, sir," answered Captain Harper. "There is one dead man and one helpless in the boat now, and it seems to me there must be a half-thousand savages in the cave."

"Aye," said the commodore, "and one of the dead ones is Mr. Truefitt. I wonder where Bob is and the other officers and men?"

"Safe, I hope and pray," said Captain Harper.

"And, sir," returned the commodore, "I would give the remaining years of my life for a score of men to clean them out."

"Give me a boat," said Captain Harper. "Mr. Harmon and I will——"

The commodore shook his head.

"It would be over before you could get there. If our men are beaten it would only add two more men to their victims. We can only wait and hope and pray, sir."

Upon the cliff pinnacle looking down into the cave, in which he could see one and all, Jack Barrett and his men stared in the same anguished misery. The sweat poured down the boy's face. He exclaimed to old Jack Buntlin, who was with him:

"I'd give anything on earth to be down there with Bob."

"We've got to stay here, sir," said Buntlin. "We've got to hold this place; if they do overcome them bloody niggers, they'd never git out alive unless we keep the top of the cliff clear."

All these things take more time to tell than they did to act. Such tremendous fighting as was going on in the cave could not long continue. Presently the anxious watchers above and on the ship saw a dark figure stagger out from the cave and dart up the beach.

"There goes one beaten man!" cried Captain Harper triumphantly.

At that instant a musket shot from the pinnacle was heard and the fleeing man plunged forward dead. Jack Buntlin had done that service. The next second it seemed that the beach was black with men, for a score or more of the savages suddenly burst out of the cave. Most of them were weaponless, and they ran in wild and furious haste up the beach toward the cleft to the right; hard on their heels pressed ten of the Americans coming out of the cave. Between the first Amer-

ican pursuer and the last flying savage ran a white man, half naked—Clawfinger! The muskets on the top of the cliff pinnacle cracked violently, some of the savages fell. They were running with the speed of the wind, however, and in mad terror. The distance between the last savage and the white man increased, and the distance between the fleeing white man and the nearest American decreased.

“Who is that?” asked the old commodore, peering shoreward, his glass neglected in the excitement.

“Clawfinger, sir!” answered Captain Harper.

“Clawfinger! By the living God! Who is nearest in chase?”

“Mr. Rayton!” cried Captain Harper.
“Look!”

The mate was weaponless. He had discharged both his pistols, his cutlass had been broken at the hilt and thrown away, but he had seized one of the broad-bladed spears with which the savages were armed. His clothes had been half torn from his body in the fight. He was a big, heavy man, and he was heavily booted. The fleeing man was half naked and in his bare feet. He was fleeing

for his life; he knew what would happen to him if he was captured, but the man pursuing was animated by as fell and determined a purpose as ever filled the breast of man. Treachery, mutiny, murder, the loss of a ship, the death of gallant comrades, their present dangerous plight, were charged against this fleeing sailor, and Mr. Rayton ran as he had never run before, as no one ever suspected he could run, while those on ship and needle watched the race.

"He is gaining on him!" cried Jack Barrett on the rock, his face flaming with excitement.

"He will get him, never fear," said Captain Harper on the ship.

"Take him alive!" roared the commodore, although no voice could have carried that distance.

The most awful and paralysing fear that could fill a man was in Clawfinger's heart. He felt that his pursuer was gaining on him. He did not know who that pursuer could be, but whoever he was there would be black death in his heart. He cast a glance behind him and discerned that the nearest pursuer was the mate, who was far ahead of the next white person, who appeared to be a small

boy, also running very fast. Both pursuer and pursued were drawing near the cleft full of savages which meant safety to one, death to the other. Clawfinger redoubled his efforts, calling out to his wild friends.

The mate and Bob Dashaway were coming like a storm. They saw the islanders coming out on the beach. Neither of the two cared anything for that. The mate would have pursued Clawfinger into the very jaws of hell and Bob would have followed them. The rest of the seamen came hurrying on some little distance in the rear of these two.

"My God!" said the commodore on the ship. "If they don't catch him, or stop him, they will be into the thick of those savages and their death will be certain."

"Shall I give them a shot, sir?" asked Captain Harper.

"Aye."

Again the heavy gun forward roared out over the waters of the harbour, and this time the shot struck just in front of the assembling savages, who were gathering in eager anticipation that the pur-

sued would lead the pursuers into their arms. But the race was almost over. The mate was hard on the heels of the sailor.

“Turn, you mutinous dog! You traitor! You murderer! You——” he panted out.

Clawfinger, seeing that he would be overtaken, wheeled suddenly in his tracks, his hand went to his belt, there was a flash of something white and gleaming in the air, and the next instant the sailor’s sheath knife, thrown with astonishing skill, buried itself to the hilt in the mate’s left shoulder.

But Clawfinger might as well have thrown a feather into the face of a tornado. It had taken a moment to turn and throw. That was enough, for the next second the mate, spear lifted, was upon him. Before the man would move hand or foot or turn aside, Mr. Rayton with all the strength and force and power of his arm and with all the venom and ferocity in his heart, drove the spear into the man’s breast and through his heart until it stood out three feet behind him. He fell crashing down on the sand as if he had been stricken by a thunderbolt, and the next instant the mate collapsed on the top of him.

The savages from the ravines rushed to the prostrate pair, but Bob Dashaway reached them first. He still had two pistols and both were charged. In his excitement in the cave, he had forgotten to use them. He whipped out one and fired it point-blank into the mass of savages, and before they could recover from that discharge, he let them have the second. They hesitated, stopped, and then bravely led came slowly on. A rifle shot, a far one and a long one, came from the pinnacle and caught the leader in the breast and he went down. Jack Barrett, praying to God as he took aim, had saved his friend.

"My God!" cried the commodore in the ship. "What a shot! And did you ever see a braver boy! Look at him! May God help him!"

"The other men are up now," said Captain Harper. "Look!"

There were one or two charged pistols still left, and the first American sailors now reached the group. They fired them at the savages, and then at Bob Dashaway's direction, picked up the body of the mate and carried him down the beach. The savages followed closely, but as they presently

came within the range of the ship's guns, their advance was checked by Captain Harper. They also made an attempt to rally on the brink of the cliff, but the sharp fire from Barrett and his men drove them back and the terrible battle was over.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TREASURE AT LAST

THE death of Mr. Truefitt and the serious wounding of Mr. Rayton left Bob Dashaway in command of the shore party for the time being, and the determination of affairs devolved entirely upon the youngster.

It was not yet possible for the commodore to recall Barrett and his covering party from the top of the pinnacle, nor could he detach any more men from those who remained on the ship. He could not tell how thoroughly the savages had been cowed and he did not dare to send any more men away lest he should be unable to serve his guns in case they made another attack.

The beach was covered with dead, but there were still overwhelming numbers of islanders.

Captain Harper volunteered to go on shore, but there was no boat on the ship which could be rowed by two or three men, who were all that

could possibly be spared as a last resort. The dinghy was ashore and so was the launch. The distance to the cave was too far for hailing. The commodore could only wait and trust to the boy's ingenuity and skill.

Bob realised the situation as clearly as any one. He stopped at the foot of the cliff and hailed his friend and shipmate at the top.

"That was a fine shot you made, Jack," he cried gratefully, "it saved my life."

"I am glad of it, Bob," was the happy answer.

"You'll keep a good watch and not let those fellows surprise us down here?"

"Never fear," answered Jack, "there isn't a man that dare show his face on the cliff brink."

Bob nodded. He then directed his men to go within the cave and bring out the dead and wounded Americans. The bodies, living and dead, were soon ranged on the clean, dry sand at the cave's mouth. Mr. Truefitt and one seaman had been killed in the boat, another seaman was lying in the boat seriously wounded. Mr. Rayton had been wounded on the strand and was now unconscious from loss of blood. Three men had been



Her timbers were rotted clear through but she still
preserved the outlines of a ship (page 307)

killed outright in the cave, two had been very badly wounded and were helpless, making a total of nine killed or severely wounded. Every man of the others had received some kind of a hurt, but none of them were so badly wounded as to be unable to turn to.

After a moment's reflection, Bob decided to leave the bodies of the dead on the strand, to put the wounded in the launch, and with the survivors to row back to the ship and report.

This was soon done. The commodore received him at the gangway and took him in his arms as he stepped on the deck. The wounded were carefully passed aboard through a gun port, and the two commanding officers at once gave them every possible attention. That was the first thing to be done.

These veteran seamen decided that, with the possible exception of the man who had been wounded in the boat, none of the wounds were mortal and that care and nursing would put most of the men on their feet speedily. Mr. Rayton's wound in itself was not serious, but the loss of blood had greatly weakened him.

As soon as the wounded had been looked to, Commodore Harkness called all hands. Seventeen men and three officers responded. The men of the boat party had bound up their slight wounds, and as they had been refreshed by something to eat and drink and a good wash, they were quite ready for any further duty.

“Captain Harper,” said the commodore, “you will take ten men and the cutter, you will tow the launch after you; Mr. Dashaway will go in the launch with two men. We must make shift with the rest to man the batteries and command the shore. You will examine the wreck that lies yonder, and if you find any treasure, load it in the launch and tow it back here without delay. We will keep you covered with the battery and with the detachment on yonder rock.”

“Very good, sir,” said Captain Harper.

It was hard work towing the launch, but the crew of the cutter managed it, and in no long time both vessels were run up on the beach.

“Great Heavens!” exclaimed Captain Harper, as he entered the cave and saw the dead people

strewn around, "what a fight you must have had!"

"Yes, sir," said Bob. "I have been in some sharp battles in the late war, as you know, sir, but I never saw anything like this."

"First," said Captain Harper, "we'll ship our own dead on the launch."

The bodies of Mr. Truefitt and the seamen were thereupon deposited in the stern sheets of the launch and covered decently with canvas.

"Now for the ship, men!" cried Captain Harper, when this was done.

The *Marigold* had been a small, queer, old-fashioned vessel of about thirty tons, pierced for sixteen small guns. She was a complete wreck. The tidal wave or earthquake had carried her from her anchorage and whirled her into the cave and had dashed her so violently against the rocks that every mast had been crushed out of her. Her timbers were rotted clear through, but she still preserved the outlines of a ship. A mass of rusty iron, with here and there bits of spar and pieces of tarred cordage, lay on the lee side. The ship lay on her starboard beam ends. As they ran

around the lower side to get into her, they stumbled over several human skeletons, evidently belonging to her unfortunate crew.

Pretty much everything had rusted away in the long time that she had lain snugly enclosed in the dry cave—that is, everything but gold and silver. With axes and hatchets the men cut away the soft and decaying planking, and exposed the contents of the hold.

The ship was a veritable treasure house. When her people had loaded her with the spoil of the great galleon they had left barely enough space for her crew and for a scant supply of provisions and water. Every place else was crammed with gold and silver, most of it in the shape of bars or ingots, but there were heaps and piles of pieces-of-eight, Spanish dollars, which had evidently been contained in bags, the canvas of which had rotted away.

In what had been the captain's cabin they found several heavy boxes, or small caskets, bound with iron clamps. These little chests were in bad condition, the wood much decayed, and the clamps rusted, but they still preserved their contents in-

tact. They were taken out with the utmost care and laid gently in the launch.

The ship had other lading also, dusty heaps with here and there a scrap of some faded fabric which indicated that they had been bales of priceless silks, and there was about the whole wreck a faint indefinite odour of the spices of the far East, although the spices themselves had long since faded into dust. They were sorry that these things were gone, but what was left was enough to enrich them all beyond the dreams of avarice.

All day long they toiled over their task; back and forth, between cave and ship, the boats passed and repassed, Mr. Harmon and the men on the ship taking the places of some of the boat party; Dashaway and others of the boat party relieving Barrett and his men on the pinnacle, and they in turn doing their part in stripping the wreck.

The meeting between Jack and Bob was a very affecting one. Jack's well directed shot had saved Bob's life, and his daring climb up the cliff and his brilliant defence of his position had saved the lives of all of them. The two boys rushed into each other's arms and hugged each other like mad.

The commodore looked approvingly on. He said, when he could get them apart:

“I am proud of you both.”

By nightfall, after such a day of toil as none of them had ever experienced, the wreck of the *Marigold* had been completely ransacked. Every ingot, every dollar, every box they could find was now safely stowed away on the *Young American*.

The party on the pinnacle was withdrawn, and fire was kindled in the wreck of the *Marigold*. While she burned the people on the ship disposed themselves for the night. Nobody went below. Two officers were on watch all the time, the two second mates or the two captains. The men and the boys got what sleep they could by the side of the guns. They were not molested through the night, but their sleep was greatly disturbed, and indeed prevented, by the howls and shrieks and wails of the islanders.

“It seems to me,” said Commodore Harkness, “that the islanders made a kind of a god of that ship, and they are howling not so much for their dead as because we have set her on fire.”

“I guess you are right, sir. I gathered so much

from what Clawfinger said," was Captain Harper's answer.

When morning broke, the men got out the boats again and kedged the *Young American* around the bend into the outer bay. Commodore Harkness managed to pick up his sheet anchor and decided not to attempt to water the ship.

He waited until the tide was favourable, and the wind happening to be blowing seaward, he made sail and took the *Young American* through the narrow pass and into the open sea.

In view of the successful quest of the treasure, he decided to abandon his original voyage and make for the Sandwich Islands, and thence return by way of the Cape to the United States, which, to anticipate, was safely reached some six months after the great adventure.

The men who had been wounded all recovered. Mr. Truefitt and the others were buried at sea in true sailor fashion, the old commodore himself reading the prayers. The two boys, Dethridge, and Buntlin, and Mr. Harmon drew the flags from the five bodies as they were launched into the great deep in their shot-weighted hammocks.

In the long voyage home the treasure was roughly appraised. It was easy enough to weigh the silver and gold, and to estimate its value, but the boxes when broken open were found filled with pearls, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and other precious and semi-precious stones, about whose value these seamen knew little.

Commodore Harkness, however, guessed that there was at least three millions of dollars' worth of treasure to be divided among the officers and men. He decided, and got the consent of all, that the division should be in accordance with the prize laws of the United States. That Mr. Harper should receive an equal share with himself, that the officers of the *Betsey* should share alike with the officers of the *Young American*, that the two boys should be rated as lieutenants, second mates, for the occasion, and that in the case of the men who had been killed, the sum which would have fallen to them should be given to their heirs.

As the men of the *Young American* were sober, industrious, and substantial seamen, each one of them received enough money from the voyage to make him independently rich for the balance of

his life; rich, that is, by the standard of those days, which was naturally much more modest than that which obtains in our own time. Even Madam Dashaway, when she realised the enormous fortune which her brother and her son brought back from this cruise, became more reconciled to the sea as a means of livelihood, and Bob easily got her permission to go on the next cruise of the *Young American* which the restless commodore was already planning to the Orient. Dethridge had become permanently attached to the fortunes of the commodore for some time, and Jack Buntlin decided to follow his old shipmate's example.

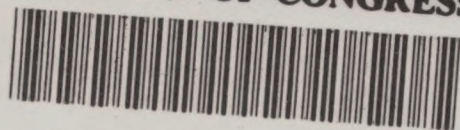
Captain Harper resolved to give up the sea and live at home with his wife and children. Mr. Rayton had money enough to buy himself a ship of his own if he wanted, but he was a bachelor, he had grown fond of the lads and of Commodore Harkness, and as the commodore offered him the command of the *Young American*, proposing to go himself as a passenger, Mr. Rayton accepted the offer.

Thus the fortunes and the misfortunes of all the characters in the story are described except

that of the arch villain of the cruise. They left the man with the vulture hand, Clawfinger, a white spot amid the dark bodies of the islanders on the beach as they sailed away. The commodore would have buried him too, but he was too far from the ship and it was too dangerous, and he had too few men to warrant him in taking the risk.

THE END

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